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HERBERT M.
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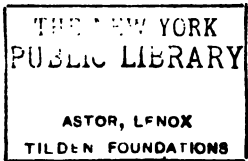
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PRIEST AND PAGAN



(page 367)

IT WAS THE JOSEPHINE HE HAD FIRST KNOWN





(page 367)

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PRIEST AND PAGAN

BY

HERBERT M. ^{ueller}HOPKINS

AUTHOR OF

"THE MAYOR OF WARWICK"



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1908



IT WAS THE JOSEPHINE OF THE NEW

PRIEST AND PAGAN

BY

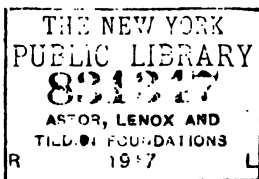
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To
MY FATHER

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PRIEST AND PAGAN

PRIEST AND PAGAN

CHAPTER I

THE SEA GIVES UP ITS DEAD

THE tale that opens with a country scene has an obvious advantage. Nature herself supplies the setting, and throws the human figure into bold relief, investing it with some of the isolation and significance of the First Man that ever trod this stage. The gentle knight pricking on the plain, the elemental peasant lifted for a moment on a hilltop against the sunset, — such figures as these will always lure the reader on. But in a great city the case stands otherwise. There the hero is robbed of his special claims to regard by virtue of the millions that surround him. The mass of humanity exercises a force of gravity that tends to reduce him to the level of the type. He is in danger of becoming a mere passing face, differing infinitesimally from other faces, his very clothes the same. Yet even here is found the man of rare interest, could we

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look behind the mask which civilisation imposes. His life holds material for a tragedy, a comedy, or an epic, that would make the world listen ; we give him an indifferent glance, and detect no sign.

A man of this kind, intrinsically exceptional, outwardly much like his fellows, became subtly more differentiated as the elevated train penetrated the eastern part of that great region of New York which lies north of the Harlem River. The strap-hangers had gradually disappeared ; the aisles were cleared ; here and there a seat was left untaken ; the remaining passengers recovered individuality,—now that the monotonous walls of brick had been left behind, giving place to patches of grass, picturesque masses of rock, and stately trees lifted high above wooden dwellings. The air too was different, and Berwyn sat up, invigorated, conscious that this was the suburb at last, and that he was appreciably nearer his destination.

It was not only in this attitude of expectancy that his difference from the other passengers was apparent. He bore no stamp of home, of family life, of daily toil. His air was that of accustomed loneliness and detachment. As he bared his head to the cool breeze of the September evening which came in through the open window, the personality thus more fully disclosed was not one of

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unusual interest. His Vandyke beard gave him a foreign look, but this meant nothing in a city where the foreigner outnumbers the native American. He was certainly not a man to associate with adventures and romance; and yet, among the many thousands speeding this way and that in the great city, it would have been impossible to match the strangeness of his story and of his present quest.

With this hint to set the fancy free, an imaginative observer might pierce beyond the superficial seeming, and read in the wrinkles about the eyes a tale of days spent in African deserts, and beneath the cloudless skies of southern Europe. He might picture the well-tanned face taking on the effect of Egyptian parchment in the years to come. Already it was traced with a record of study and malign experience; it conveyed an impression of hardness and age in one still young. But the observer would always return to question those eyes, acquiescent and hopeless, the eyes of a spiritual prisoner, though capable of brightening at times to a surprising smile.

As if conscious of having become conspicuous among the few, Berwyn glanced about the car with an air of furtiveness before turning his attention again to the suburb. Dreary beyond compare it seemed to him, and touched with the wildness of the approaching night. That plain stone spire,

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lifting the cross against the breaking clouds, was merely big, and failed to redeem the prevailing commonplace of the other buildings. But presently something better appeared. Above an arched gate he read the name of St. John's College. A lawn of softest green stretched away beneath enormous elms; he saw the black-cassocked figure of a Jesuit priest wandering slowly toward a grey stone hall which one might have thought a penitentiary, were it not for the gilded cross above the dome. Here, at least, were atmosphere and tradition, if only of a half-century growth. The vines had become a beautifying mantle over every inch of the quaint chapel, and the bell stirred within him memories of older lands.

What red brick building was that on a hilltop toward the west, bare and forlorn, in spite of cross and pinnacle and the kindness of the shadows? Berwyn remembered that he had seen it from the window of a passing train; and now he recognised also the dome of the conservatory on the right, seeming a huge, green bubble, ready to break and vanish in the rising breeze.

The train stopped, and he found that this part of his journey was at an end. He followed the other passengers across the bridge above the railroad tracks, for he had not yet reached his destination, though he had been travelling steadily for an hour. Somewhere further north it lay, deeper within that

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amorphous fringe of suburb. It was no man's land to him, merely a place to pass through to reach country or city, and without the special charms of either. He glanced up at the convent on the hill with a momentary thought of half-contemptuous pity for the women immured there, away from the world. That building gave the prevailing tone of evening melancholy a concrete expression.

The rocking trolley-car sped northward, smoking with its damp mass of Italian labourers, going home to their colony in Williamsbridge. These, Berwyn reflected, were the builders of the city of the future, the vanguard of civilisation, moving on to other habitations when their work was done. He listened to snatches of their conversation, and was transported in fancy to the Italy he knew and loved. But their talk was that of peasants, and he returned to his scrutiny of the suburb.

The sky was now aflame, and the world below caught something of the splendour of that fantastic sunset. It crept in between the cheap frame buildings that lined the long vista of the avenue; it reddened the heaps of rock and the staring signs in vacant lots; it transformed shallow pools of muddy water into slits and patches of gold. Through this atmosphere a long procession of huge drays, delivery waggons, and furniture vans plodded slowly on, the city marching northward on wheels.

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At Gun Hill Road the heavy-footed passengers dropped to the ground with their tools and bundles, and moved away like a herd of dingy, diminutive animals, seeking the rest of their stalls. Berwyn remained alone in the car, which now began with accelerated speed to descend the hill. This was the last stage of his journey, and he glanced from left to right with quickened interest that lost no detail of the scene: the scattered houses of Williamsbridge beyond the shallow valley of the Bronx River on the east, and on the west the long stone wall that bounded Woodlawn Cemetery. It was to this side that he finally turned a fixed, attentive gaze, until, beyond the iron pickets of the fence, he saw the crowded tombs against the hill slope, seeming in the deepening shadows pale mushroom growths, called forth by the teeming rain.

The conductor clutched his way along the running-board of the open car till he came to his only passenger, and paused to comment upon the clearing sky. Berwyn's smile of assent was almost imperceptible, and his reply trivial as the subject demanded, yet the impression of age and hardness was gone in an instant. Instead, his face was lighted by a gentle, impersonal courtesy, so that the conductor lingered, unconsciously attracted. There was in Berwyn something of the attitude of the Pagan poet who recognised the claims of mere humanity. It was not

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interest that held him attentive, but consciousness of a common pilgrimage and a common fate.

"How late are the gates of this cemetery left open?" he asked presently.

"Seven o'clock," the man answered, "and it's after six now."

Some instinct impelled him to restrain his curiosity, and to refrain from commenting upon his passenger's evident intention of visiting the place at this unusual hour; but when they reached the gate, he looked after Berwyn's retreating figure, his mind filled with conjectures. This was no mourner, he reflected, like those poor women, clothed in black, who were now making their way in the opposite direction.

Until now Berwyn had scarcely realised what he had come to see; but his imagination was quickened at sight of the mourners, and of the monumental workshops which lined the other side of the street. As he passed between the granite posts he buttoned his coat about him, though the evening was warm, like one who feels a sudden chill.

The ground was not absolutely strange to him, but it was years since he had come there in the procession of that grand family funeral which left him an orphan adrift in the world. He knew the general direction he ought to take, and went rapidly up Central Avenue, past the solitary figure of an

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officer in grey, who glanced at him curiously, but without remark. From this road he turned into East Border Avenue, and followed it until he came to a steep concrete path that led directly up the hill and was lost to view among the tombs.

This must be the way, he thought, and he climbed more slowly, passing between hooded mourning figures, dim angels with lifted wings, shafts and crosses and shrines. Among these many images of death his mood became one of settled and concentrated gloom. Was it possible that he had anticipated mere curiosity in such surroundings? For one moment he almost wavered in his purpose; but his habitual, half-cynical composure reasserted itself, and he kept his face set toward the ridge.

Presently, as his head emerged above the shadow of the hill, he saw the last dip of the sun's red rim. Against the clear amber of the west, now swept of clouds, the tangled wilderness of monuments and trees was silhouetted with startling distinctness, and midway among them stood the object of his search. A temple of grey granite, built in the early Doric style, confronted him, and he mounted the steps with fast beating heart. He peered between the bars of the massive doors, and saw at the end of the aisle a stained-glass window, faintly suffused by the western light. The sky was rapidly growing

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darker, but still he caught a hint of the design in the window. At first he thought it might be a representation of falling autumn leaves, and then he guessed that those fluttering objects were the wings of butterflies, that ancient symbol of the escaping soul.

Berwyn stepped back and surveyed the shadowed front of the temple for the inscription. The absence of Christian symbols had assured him that his quest was at an end; but though he knew that he was about to read his own name carved there, the actual letters smote him with a shock of surprise and fear. A breath of wind extinguished his match, yet the words still seemed to stare at him from the wall—**GEORGE BERWYN**. He lighted another match, and still another, until he had read the whole :—

TO THE HAPPY MEMORY OF
GEORGE BERWYN, SHIPWRECKED IN
THE FAIR PROMISE OF HIS YOUTH
UPON THE ILLYRIAN COAST, THIS
CENOTAPH HAS BEEN ERECTED BY
HIS UNCLE JOHN UXBRIDGE

Berwyn sat down to realize more fully what it meant. He had regained his composure now, and characteristically he lighted a cigarette to aid his reflections. Long accustomed to Italy, the land of monuments and mourning, he began to throw off

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the spell of his surroundings, though he was sitting on the steps of a cenotaph erected to himself. An impish sense of humour took possession of him. For a year he had allowed himself to be thought dead. He had come home at last, half resolved to make himself known to his uncle ; but this monument, whose existence he had learned, on the day of his arrival, from a short paragraph in the evening paper, seemed to thrust him back among the dead. Why not live near home, he mused, to see without being seen, to hover like a ghost among those who believed him drowned, until some time, in some way, the discovery would be made that he was still living ? There was something dramatic in the plan which made a strong appeal to his fancy.

He thought of his uncle with momentary compunction. From a distance he had not realised the older man's grief, but this tribute opened his eyes and showed him to himself in rather a shabby light. With what face could he now appear and say that his failure to send word of his safety was a mere whim, an experiment, a searching for new experience ? For the first time he knew his uncle's faith in his literary ambitions, by this record of disappointment. Berwyn consoled himself with the thought that the pang of sorrow was now past, and that his uncle had returned to his pleasures and his work with his former zeal. The shattered universe

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might fall about John Uxbridge without robbing him of his zest for life. Such was his nephew's amused reflection, but this exhibition of faith and fine feeling rebuked him. Indulged though he had always been, he could not go back and say that he had played such a jest with life, and that he was still a failure. He thought of the "fair promise" his uncle had seen in him, and came to a sudden resolve that he would fulfil it, even at the eleventh hour. His incognito should no longer be a mere game of hide and seek; he would keep it now with a purpose. Under an assumed name he would yet win a reputation; then, and not till then, he would return. This should be his reparation.

Berwyn's tragedy had been merely that of a smooth and easy life. His prosperity had slain him. He told himself that his very leisure, his friends, his opportunities, his travels, even his studies, had compassed his defeat. If he could only be poor and alone, perhaps in prison, like Bunyan or Cervantes, with time to think, he could yet do some great thing. And now he had blundered upon the conditions he needed. It was his last chance to redeem himself, and he determined to take it.

While he yet lingered on the steps, unwilling to leave the place where he had found such inspiration, the night had taken on an aspect of wondrous beauty. The full moon, standing midway in the

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eastern sky, had at length prevailed and thrown its spell upon the world. It drew prismatic tints from the smoke of a passing train; it played strange tricks with monument and tree; and those small wooden dwellings that dotted the opposite hill, beyond the wide valley and the river, might now be the distant roofs of Perugia, so completely were they transformed by the magic of the moonlight.

CHAPTER II

CRESSON ENTERTAINS A GHOST

ON the following afternoon, at an earlier hour, visitors to the cemetery saw Berwyn hovering about the granite pile that possessed such a fascination for him; sitting on the topmost step, looking over the valley, reading the inscription, peering between the wrought-iron bars of the massive door, and wandering off among the tombs, only to return to his former resting-place.

There were the charred matches he had used the night before, symbols, he mused, of his extinguished resolution. What was he doing here? Why had he come back? He could not answer the question, and indeed made no great effort to do so. An absolute calm held him, a philosophical ataraxia, akin to the quiet of the atmosphere which had left those half-burned sticks unstirred. Perhaps he wished to renew the psychic experience of the night before, though he knew well that no experience can be absolutely duplicated; or his habitual infirmity of will caused him to postpone action one day more, while he lingered like a ghost at the door of his own tomb. The world's belief in his death, this permanent

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expression of the belief, began to infect him with spiritual paralysis.

He dragged himself once more from the step, and stood in the path some distance off, as motionless as one of those shrouded figures of stone. His eyes, like theirs, were fixed and expressionless; and he was unconscious of the effect of his stare upon a man who came rapidly down the path. A moment later he started violently at a touch on his shoulder and a voice in his ear.

"I say, old man, you're not in trouble, are you?"

Berwyn recovered himself, and turned to smile at the anxiety betrayed in the voice of the speaker. There was no cause for resentment in the stranger's face, which expressed concern rather than mere curiosity. It was a face clear cut and strong, intellectually cheerful, if one might use the phrase, for there was no hint in the keen eyes and determined lips of an easy, emotional optimism. He was apparently somewhat younger than Berwyn, as well as taller. Standing there together, they were in marked contrast to each other, answering to the popular conception of the Anglo-Saxon and the Gallic type.

"I'm not in any particular trouble, thank you," Berwyn answered quietly. Then, curious to see himself as he had been seen, he added, "Why did you ask?"

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"I don't know," the other answered. "I'm not in the habit of speaking to every one who seems in trouble here; but this time it suddenly occurred to me that I might be passing by on the other side—you understand. Worse things might happen to a man than falling among thieves."

"Among morbid thoughts, for example?"

The stranger nodded.

"To be equally frank," Berwin admitted, "I had fallen among morbid thoughts, and they had quite stripped me of illusions. You had some idea of saving a man from a rash act?"

"Something like that. I ought to explain, perhaps, that I have just buried a man who committed suicide, and my mind is full of the subject. I had known him and his troubles, and was haunted by the conviction that he might be alive to-day had I possessed sufficient intuition to see where he was drifting."

For the first time Berwyn observed a leather case on the gravel walk, and he assumed that it contained the stranger's vestments. There was nothing in his garb, however, to indicate the clerical profession.

"Do you mind my asking," he ventured, "whether the law of the Church in regard to suicides has changed? That would be a hopeful sign."

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"There is a rubric which prohibits Christian burial," the other answered, "but this man was a Christian. He went insane over business worries. Rubric or no rubric, I buried him. By the way, if we don't hurry, we shall have to climb the fence to get out. The gates will be closed."

Berwyn did not mention the fact that he had climbed the fence to effect his exit the previous night, and he accepted his companion's implied invitation to accompany him.

"I feel quite like the man Horace tells about in one of his satires," he remarked, "when he was turned back from the Milvian Bridge by a philosopher, who bade him think better of his intention and cultivate a Stoic's beard. Not that I really had such grim intentions as you feared, however."

"It's a good place to get away from, at all events," his companion answered, quickening his pace. "I'm going to walk home, to see whether I can drop the blues somewhere by the roadside. Are you going back to the city? Why not walk part way with me?"

"You're not quite sure yet that I'll not do something desperate," Berwyn remarked, keenly amused, "but I'll go, with pleasure."

"Come along to keep me from doing something desperate, then," the other answered. "It's lonely work here in the suburbs at times."

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"I can imagine it might be," Berwyn assented.

They passed out of the gate and turned southward toward the city. Beyond the railroad tracks on the east the melancholy houses climbed the hill, steeped now in the warm, misty light of sunset, waiting for the glamour of the moon.

"Is it all like this?" Berwyn enquired. "Is there ~~no~~ touch of picturesqueness and beauty to offset ~~so~~ much of the commonplace?"

"We have St. John's College, the hemlock grove in the park, and the old Faile estate; but these grow upon you. Familiarity, instead of breeding contempt, opens one's eyes to unsuspected charm, especially if you have work to do here and get interested in it."

"It is by such work as yours," Berwyn remarked, "that the Church commends itself to a Pagan and an outsider like myself."

He was surprised to discover the next moment that his effort at tact had somehow miscarried.

"Don't credit me with unselfishness!" the other cried, with a swift bitterness in his expression. "Don't include me in the saving remnant. I'm doing my work by main strength; I'm still dragging my feet and looking back."

Unconsciously he clenched his free hand in a dramatic gesture, then let it fall relaxed at his side, as if a storm had passed over him.

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Berwyn was unexpectedly interested. The man was not wholly happy. In his confession — in his lonely situation — he suggested some tragic figure of fiction. Perhaps he had been sent out here by his superiors to be disciplined for heresy or misconduct. He might almost be a French priest, and yonder city Paris, blurred by sunset, mocking, challenging, calling, offering the realities of this life for the shadows of the next, or the shadows of this life for the realities of the next, — the eternal doubt. But this glimpse behind the veil was no sooner given than withdrawn. His companion's face lost its intensity. He was once more friendly and cheerful.

"Tell me about yourself," he asked. "You know all that's essential about me now, except my name — that's Cresson."

"And mine is Le Strange," Berwyn answered.

The name had come into his mind at the moment by a freak of memory, as one that had been in his family long ago. Why he chose it now, he could not have told; but any name would do, and he must seem to return the confidence reposed in him.

"There's nothing to tell about myself," he went on, "except that I am a victim of *Wanderlust*, and that I try to write books. But I allow myself to be distracted. Sometimes I think I could do a piece of work worth while if a kind friend would only

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lock me up and chain me to a table, with pen and ink and paper, so that I couldn't get away."

"You don't live in New York, then?"

"No — my family used to. I was looking up one of my ancestors in the cemetery this afternoon, to verify a date, for genealogy is a mild mania with me too. I don't live anywhere for long at a time. I was just stopping over in the city on my way west from Europe."

He noted with some relief that his story was accepted unquestioningly. But why should it not be? He was interested to note that he had already acquired the quick suspicion of the hunted.

The region through which they passed grew more diverting, and claimed attention, thrusting itself into their conversation. The construction of gigantic retaining-walls and the opening of new streets was going on continually. At the sinking of the sun a series of blasts — heralding the end of the day's work — sent loud reverberations across the park against the hills beyond, like salvos of artillery. Then Italian workmen began to pass them, streaming down the slope in their haste for home, resembling the repulsed remnant of an assaulting column.

"One can't get an adequate impression of a place from a car window," Berwyn remarked. "Only when you're on foot do you taste the tang of the

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soil; and this particular flavour is pleasant to me. I like the Italians."

"So long as they confine their Black Hand operations to their own race," Cresson returned, "I don't know that we have very much cause to complain of them."

But he was more intent upon pointing out local objects than upon the subject thus suggested, and called attention to a huge level mound, flanked by short stone towers, that lifted itself against the west.

"From the top of that reservoir you can see the Palisades on one side and Long Island Sound on the other. We are about midway between them."

The street now rose above the park, which lay, a basin of shadow, pricked with electric lights along its winding roads. The white stone bridges which arched the Bronx River were barely discernible. The whole effect was fairylike, with an air of solemnity and shut-in repose derived from the wall of woods and the hill beyond. The moon was slowly changing and brightening, about to weave its last night's spell.

Cresson stopped presently before an isolated, two-storied frame house that stood on a terrace above the sidewalk, between the street and the park.

"This is my habitat," he announced. "Thanks

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to your company, I've lost my blue devils on the way. Come up and share pot-luck with me. You can go right after dinner if you wish, but, for the matter of that, there's a bed at your disposal if you will stay over till morning. I don't get a chance to exercise the virtue of hospitality often. 'Thereby some have entertained angels unawares.'"

"Then I suppose it's my duty, as well as my pleasure, to accept the invitation," Berwyn answered, thinking how surprised his host would be if he knew how much nearer he came to entertaining a ghost than an angel.

They ascended to the second floor, and he followed his guide's flaring match down a dark hall and into a room on the right. Through the eastern windows he caught a glimpse of the moon above the park, before the room sprang into view with the lighting of the gas.

The furniture of the place was distinctive. The chairs and tables were of mahogany, and of a value which Berwyn was able to appreciate. Books extended halfway up the walls, and the upper half was literally covered with pictures, as if the occupant had placed them there for storage rather than for effect. What struck Berwyn at once was the fact that there was nothing here but black and white, whether etched or engraved; and then that the subjects were all public buildings or monuments

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of one kind and another: a Piranesi of the Arch of Titus, a House of Parliament, a famous palace, scenes from Oxford and Cambridge, cathedrals and churches. The last predominated to such an extent as to suggest a collector's hobby, and careful trips through the highways and byways of England.

"Just make yourself at home," Cresson said, "while I get the dinner on the table."

As Berwyn sank into a chair, his eyes were brought to a reading-level with an open book arranged on a rest beside him, and he recognised the text as Hebrew. His host had seemed a practical worker, rather than a scholar, and he wondered casually whether this book were really ever used, or whether it were merely decorative, a relic of seminary days. Through the open door he heard Cresson engaged in a colloquy down the dumb-waiter with some one below, and presently he brought the dinner in on a tray.

"It's an odd circumstance," he remarked, as he arranged the dishes, "but when I was in Oxford one summer, five years ago, I stopped with a quaint couple by the name of Peach; and they are the same people who are living downstairs now. He had been a butler and she a lady's maid. They came to America, and I ran across them out here in the Bronx when I was looking for lodgings. They're parishioners of mine now, though not

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much given to church-going; but I forgive their remissness in consideration of the excellence of their *cuisine*. What do you say to a bottle of ale to go with this mutton pie? Is n't this like a page from Dickens?"

"I should like nothing better," Berwyn answered, discovering in himself an unexpected zest and appetite.

During the meal he directed the conversation to his host's work, partly because he was beginning to be interested, partly to avoid the subject of himself. He found out very soon that church architecture was Cresson's hobby, and in the course of their discussion he learned casually two additional facts about him: that this furniture was the wreck of former affluence, and that he was engaged in organising a new parish, his first charge.

Afterwards they sat by the windows and smoked, looking out over the park. In the immediate foreground, below the bank, trains passed by at intervals, the smoke of the locomotives spreading out ethereally in the moonlight. The distance from them was so short that they could see the passengers reading their papers, or seated at the tables in the dining-cars.

Berwyn gradually sank into a drowsy content, until he found his disinclination to return to the city increased to actual inability to do so. Besides,

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he felt safe from discovery, as safe, he told himself, as if he were in the Desert of Sahara.

"I believe I'll close with your invitation to put me up for the night," he said at last.

"To-night, and many nights, for that matter," Cresson answered. "In fact, if you want a prison in which to write that book you were speaking of, you're welcome to share this place with me for the winter. I've been looking for some one to help me keep bachelor hall."

Berwyn did not close with the offer then and there, for he divined that it might have been made in a Spanish mood of hospitality. Nevertheless, as he lay awake in his bed, he turned it over in his mind, until it began to wear the aspect of accomplished fact.

Though accustomed to sleep in strange places, and to meet with unusual adventures, his first drowsiness passed like a clearing mist, leaving him broad awake. He heard every trolley-car that came grinding around the curve below his window, and the less frequent passing of railroad trains on the other side of the house. In the intervals country sounds reached him: the barking of dogs, the clacking hubs of some farmer's waggon, a foolish rooster deceived by the moonlight.

Presently he heard the notes of a violin, so faint that he supposed it to be in another house, or far

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down the street; but he decided at last that his host must be playing in the room where they had dined, and that the *pianissimo* was due to a mute placed upon the strings. No doubt this was a precaution against waking his guest.

Berwyn was struck by the passion and skill of the musician. The air was wholly in a minor key, and gave the impression of improvisation, though it might be an Hungarian rhapsody. He was appreciative of music, and the violin was his favourite instrument. Here was a commentary, or exegesis, on the few words Cresson had spoken by the way in regard to his work. There were two Titans in his nature struggling for the mastery, — one, conventional, cheerful, and practical; the other, a spirit of revolt and question and despair.

Clearly, this was no ordinary man who had asked him to share his house, and if the invitation held over, if the morning showed no change, he would accept. But, for the present, he was content to listen to the story of the violin, and so he fell asleep.

CHAPTER III

A NEW FIGURE IN THE LANDSCAPE

WHEN Berwyn awoke in the morning, the mood of the previous night still ruled his imagination. His host seemed a mysterious and romantic figure. The circumstances of their meeting, Cresson's hint of unhappiness, his lonely field of work, and finally the subdued, impassioned music of his violin,—all these things made an appeal to one who had seen something of the religion beyond the mountains.

But the actual man was quite different. As Berwyn sat and watched him arranging the breakfast on the table, chatting of indifferent things, he entertained the humorous fancy that a substitution had occurred while he slept. Cresson's double had taken the place of the richer personality. This was the shell from which the music of the sea had fled. Here was a man practical almost to the point of the commonplace, more like a wholesome Englishman, fresh from his morning tub and ready for the duties of the day, than a priest caught in the meshes of ecclesiastical discipline, eating out his heart in exile. Only in the long, capable fingers could he now see the musician, and in the wide, well-set eyes a hint

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of ideality. Presently Cresson returned to his proposal of the previous evening.

"You may be taking long chances with a stranger," Berwyn objected. "It might be well to remember the proverb about wintering and summering."

"Try it for a month, then," his host suggested. "If there is a risk, it is mutual, and if you don't like it, the partnership can be dissolved at any time."

"That's reasonable," Berwyn answered, wavering.

"And to come down to facts and figures, the rent here is thirty dollars a month, which includes Mrs. Peach's services with broom and dustpan. The board is five dollars a week."

Berwyn was not accustomed to count the cost of anything he desired, and his final acceptance of the terms was based on other considerations. He felt that he could find no safer hiding-place than here, and so the bargain was concluded. This, then, was to be his next home, the oddest he had ever occupied in his many journeys along the world's highways. A train was passing by, and he imagined what his habitat must look like to any passenger who chanced to give it a casual glance,—a wooden box perched on the railroad bank, exactly like so many thousand other wooden boxes that lined the

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route. This was the sort of place that furnished material for the comic papers. Looking from car windows himself, he had sometimes lazily wondered what kind of people lived beside the tracks. Now he knew what kind might live there, when a freak of fate so willed.

The view from the window had consciously influenced his decision. The wide meadowland of the park, sparkling the night before with gas-jets, now steamed with a delicate, drifting mist, through which bands of Italians passed on to their work, figures that seemed to have risen up from the roadway and to share its dingy colouring. He saw the yellow dome of the botanical museum, the great, green bubble of the conservatory, and the gilded cross of St. John's College to the south. All these objects seemed to rest upon the treetops, the wall of woods that became solid as it swept northward, showing dark hemlock beyond the lighter willows that fringed the little river.

A faint strain of *Santa Lucia*, sung by one of the Italians in the park, reached his ears, and reminded him of the music by which he had been lulled to sleep.

"By the way," he asked, "were you playing the violin last night, or did I hear it from somewhere outside?"

"I thought you were asleep," Cresson answered.

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"But don't be alarmed. I've passed the practising stage. It's only at long intervals that I take up the instrument now."

He went into the adjoining bedroom, and returned with the violin in his hand.

"That's a Stradivarius," he said, giving it to Berwyn for inspection. "You see, it's the long pattern, too; and look at the curve of the sound-holes."

"I shan't drop it," Berwyn assured him, peering through the aperture for the name and date. "I'm not a connoisseur either of violins or of violin playing, but I know what I like, as those say who know nothing. I wish you would develop the habit of practising."

He handed the instrument back carefully, conscious of the anxious hands waiting to receive it.

"This violin has a history," Cresson informed him, when he returned to the room. Berwyn would have been glad to hear the story, but his host, as if the subject had suddenly dropped from his mind, took a pair of large field-glasses which hung suspended in a leather holster by the window, and trained them on a bare hilltop just north of the forest across the park.

Berwyn followed the direction of the glasses.

"That checkerboard effect must be due to the lines of streets, I suppose," he remarked, "but I

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don't see any houses. I am reminded of the view one gets of the Azores from the deck of a steamer. There the stone fences against a green background give a similar impression."

"Those streets are only curbed and graded," Cresson told him. "Do you see men moving about on the summit?"

"Now that you speak of it, I do."

"They are the Italians who are working on the excavation for my new church. Would you like to see the blast? It's interesting—quite like the explosion of a shell in battle, I fancy."

Berwyn peered through the powerful lenses and now saw the figures clearly, running this way and that. He could also distinguish the waving of two small red flags, and he imagined the shouts of warning, though there seemed no passer-by on that lonely spot to be jeopardised by flying fragments.

As his glance rested on the workman who bent over the battery, and while he waited for the downward movement that would ignite the charge, a new figure suddenly emerged from below the rim of the hill. Berwyn's first thought was that the wife or daughter of one of the rock men had come up to see the blast. Perhaps the flash of the blue skirt gave him this impression, for he knew the Italian love of colour. But now he saw that the

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girl's appearance created a diversion among the workmen. The runners stood still and looked back enquiringly, while the man at the battery gesticulated in protest.

The next moment the blast was shot. First, a cloud of dust and scattering débris, then, after what seemed a long interval, a dull reverberation.

"I believe she did it herself!" It was Cresson who spoke, and Berwyn, looking up, was surprised to see that the little tableau had caused him some excitement.

"You can evidently see with two eyes as well as I can with four," he remarked.

Cresson took the glasses unceremoniously, and adjusted them to his vision.

"They're going to set off another blast," was his only answer. This time Berwyn imagined a repetition of the scene he had first witnessed, informed by his hearing alone. The effect of the trivial incident upon his companion was so marked that he became quietly attentive. Cresson's exuberance and cheerfulness were gone, replaced by unrest and dissatisfaction, perhaps by a stronger emotion. He fidgeted awhile, looking in a baffled manner at his guest, and then cut the knot with more decision than tact.

"Le Strange," he said, "I'll have to go over to the hill to see how things are getting along there.

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You'll excuse me, won't you? You'll be here when I return? Or at dinner time, anyhow?"

"I intend to go to the city this morning," Berwyn answered, somewhat amused at the celerity with which he had been disposed of, and curious in regard to the cause. "I must get a few things to begin housekeeping with. Perhaps I shan't be back till to-morrow."

Cresson was evidently relieved. "Walk in any time," he said heartily, "day or night. And here's a key, — Mrs. Peach gave me two. By the way, if you want to send out anything, don't forget the name of this street, and the number of the house. I did just that thing the first time I went shopping, and had to come home to find out where I lived."

When he had gone, Berwyn still lingered, with that sense of peace and possession which comes to one left alone in a house. Looking from the window, he saw Cresson passing over the iron bridge that spanned the tracks a short distance below. His first thought was of the man's fine figure and bearing, and then of his probable errand.

Berwyn was interested in religion, as a phenomenon of vast importance in the history of the human race, though he himself stood detached and unmoved. The priesthood was a subject upon which he had often fastened his attention, and he had found diversion in the society of the clergy. This

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man, he reflected, was making a mistake at the very beginning of his career. It was evident that he did not know how to play the part he had elected for himself. He dressed like a layman, and his speech was as direct as that of a man of business. This was no way to appeal to the imagination of the masses, who love mystery and habiliments. And, as if this deficiency of understanding were not enough, he appeared to be involved already in some love affair that would retard his advancement.

Such was Berwyn's first analysis of his host. He had mismanaged his own life, which was perhaps the reason he felt so competent to manage the lives of others. Not that he would ever make the attempt, for the cynical observer could never become the guide, philosopher, and friend. And what difference did it make if one more man went astray, in a world where all were blindly groping?

Musing in this strain, he watched the subject of his speculations descend into the parkland. A subtle smile lighted up his sombre eyes. He extended his hand towards the glasses, hanging temptingly near, but refrained.

Before going to the city, he inspected once more the two front rooms which Cresson had assigned to his use. His study commanded a view only less pleasant than the one to the east; for on this side, too, trees were still abundant, though intersected

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by new streets, and the ground rose in a series of fine terraces to the green embankment of the reservoir. On the whole, he was well satisfied with his bargain. His companion was evidently a liveable fellow, who would not ask too many questions; and he was not uninteresting. Above all, here was a safe asylum, the very place in which to put his new experiment to the test.

CHAPTER IV

THE WRATH OF LOVE

AT any other time Cresson would doubtless have observed the abundant beauty of the goldenrod, the white lacework of the wild carrot, and the banks of purple sumach, for he was on intimate terms with nature ; but now his eyes were fixed upon the figure on the hilltop which, as Berwyn had guessed, was the cause of his sudden change of mood.

When he had crossed the stone arch which spanned the little river, he swerved to the right, and was soon chin-deep in an arborescent maze of bushes. The path, in spite of various eccentric twists and turns, maintained a general direction between the hill on the north and an old stone mansion on the south, whose walls could be glimpsed at intervals through the trees, where the vines had left them brown. Directly in line between the house and the site of the church on the hill, he leaned against a rail fence and waited, facing in the direction from which she would appear.

Her approach was heralded by a soft, vagrant note, so like the note of a robin that only her lover,

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who knew her little accomplishment so well, could have failed to be deceived. Then came a rustling among the bushes, a flash of colour, and she stood above him, balancing herself on a stone with the aid of the pliant branches which she grasped in her hands. Her whistling ceased abruptly, and the pucker of her lips melted into a smile of welcome.

Of all the times when lovers meet, early morning is the most tender. There is an element of surprise and rarity in such encounters. Back of them lies the thought of sacred sleep in shadowed rooms, and of dreams thus fulfilled. Romance brims the cup of young life like dew. All this Cresson felt, and stood bewitched, forgetting his purpose. Her eyes were so like two clear, blue pools against her sun-browned face; youth and love of life spoke eloquently in her poise, which was that of a bird prepared for flight. There was something birdlike, too, in the turn of her head, quizzical, or alert, or curious. Who could define it?

"Where do you suppose I've been, Cyril?" she demanded triumphantly.

"Up on the hill," he answered, "helping the Italians with their work."

"Then you saw me!" she exclaimed. "Don't you think it was loyal of me to set off the first blast? I had quite a sentiment about it."

"Josephine," he said firmly, "why do you wan-

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der unprotected all over the country at any hour of the day or night? I tell you, this is a rough neighbourhood, and those Italians are dangerous fellows. You don't know what might happen."

He extended his hand to help her down, and had she accepted his offer, the quarrel would doubtless have ended before it was well begun. But they were both too young, too new in love, for such a quick resolving. Her face shadowed sensitively with disappointment and pain.

"No, I don't want any help, thank you. I can get down alone."

She passed him disdainfully, and he followed, his face set in a misery of pride. All the freshness and beauty of the morning had vanished; and he hardened his heart against the knowledge that this destructive work was his. It was Josephine who talked as they went along. The branches she released sometimes struck his face, but he paid no heed.

"The Italians are not dangerous fellows. Haven't I known them all my life? But it's just because you wish to tyrannise over me. I knew your mood the minute I saw you. Don't talk to me."

"I must," he answered, "for the sake of our happiness."

"Why don't you say for my good?" she retorted. "That would suit better the solemnity with which

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you take everything. Do you wonder I hate your profession? It has made a perfect prig of you."

"Nonsense, Josephine," he protested. "My profession has nothing to do with it. Only a week ago a girl was murdered on the Pelham Road, not a mile from here. And the loneliness of the district is shown by the fact that the murderer escaped with ease."

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"How can you compare me with that poor creature?" she cried perversely.

"Really, you are unreasonable," he said warmly. "Other women have been frightened, even attacked, in this very part of the park. Of course, I know how much you feel at home in a region that was once all your own, where you wandered freely as a child; but conditions have changed. The country has gone, and the city has not yet come. Do you honestly give me credit for nothing better than petty tyranny?"

The evidence was too much in his favour, and she made no reply. But such differences of opinion are not to be reconciled by argument, and there is little place for reason in the court of love. This was one of the things Cresson did not know; and he wondered why the little head before him remained obdurately unturned.

They cleared the brushwood and entered the more immediate neighbourhood of the house, an

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open forest plot, green under foot and still predominantly green overhead, though the first touch of autumn was upon the leaves of the elms. The interspace was filled with cool breezes, and with impish lights and shadows. It was such a spot as Robin Hood would have chosen for his noonday rest.

The old Faile mansion possessed a repose and hospitality which seemed southern rather than northern, and dated from the days of America's more dignified architecture, before the period of the Civil War. It was merely one long, two-storied, stone hall, with a low, octagonal cupola in the centre, with arched windows, and a wide door. The roof of the deep verandah which surrounded the whole house was supported by white wooden pillars, fluted, and with plain Doric capitals. The broad stone steps were worn by many rains and by the feet of past generations. It would have been difficult for a stranger, circling the place, to decide which was originally the front of the house, as the opposite doors were exactly alike, one facing the higher roadway, the other opening upon the woods that extended down to the river. In the disrepair of the mansion one could read its history at a glance. Here was a relic of the old-fashioned *otium ruris*,—gentility in one of its last strongholds, fighting a losing battle with the city for the possession of the land.

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The lovers turned, as by unspoken agreement, in the direction of the river, which separated what remained of the Faile estate from the park beyond. The turf over which they passed was ornamented at intervals by statuary of some merit, showing that the original owner of the place possessed an artistic sense superior to the iron dogs and deer of that period: here a little girl, extending in her dimpled hands a cluster of grapes; there an angel with lifted wings; in another place the figure of a horse, it might be one of Triton's team, plunging, as it were, above the sea of grass. At the very edge of the stream stood a solitary figure, evidently of later date, a Union soldier in grey granite, leaning upon his musket. A boat, fastened to the bent arm, tugged intermittently in the current.

Josephine sat down on a rustic bench beside the soldier and stared out across the park toward the fringe of houses, among them Cresson's own, that topped the higher ground beyond the railroad. The day was already growing warm. The spiritual coolness of the morning breeze was gone; it came across the lowlands now, freighted with the opulence and odours of midsummer. In the quivering lower stratum insects hummed lazily nature's mood of fruition and enjoyment.

The cause of his quarrel with Josephine suddenly seemed unimportant to Cresson. He sat beside her,

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hoping that she would yield, but unable himself to make the first advance. Tormented by the nearness that drew him and the pride that held him rigid, he studied the fine ripples of bright hair which overflowed her combs, two shades of yellow that intermingled like the different shades of cornsilk. Instead of telling her of its fascination, he reached for her hand, and was rebuked by its withdrawal.

“What you refuse to see is your own attitude of mind,” she resumed abruptly. “Back of it all is the conviction that you can’t, by any possibility, be in the wrong. It is just pride, and a determination to have your own way, rather than any anxiety for my safety, that makes you act as you do. You’re so accustomed to laying down the law to others that you can’t stand the least criticism yourself. I’ve seen you stiffen in a moment at a perfectly reasonable suggestion, because you thought some one was trying to influence you. I suppose that’s your idea of strength?”

She turned toward him with the question, lifting one eyebrow slightly, — an odd little trick he loved, the momentary marring of perfection that only served to give it emphasis. The ghost of humour glimmered in his grey eyes.

“I see myself as a ramping and a roaring lion, Josephine, barring your way to liberty. But it’s the danger —”

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"Danger!" she echoed. She was aware of her perversity, but a suspicion that she amused him, that her caustic sarcasm was ineffectual, made her resolve that he should suffer. "The only thing I regret is that I was such a little fool as to have any sentiment about the church. I thought you would be pleased, instead of which you met me with black looks, as if I were a naughty child that deserved a scolding."

"That's just it," he broke in eagerly. "You don't realise that you are a grown woman now, any more than you realise the changed conditions of the neighbourhood. But it's true, Josephine, and every one turns to look at you. Suppose one of those lawless fellows should become infatuated with your beauty? You ought to guard against the possibility of such a thing."

"Leave me my few acres of freedom a little longer," she returned drearily. "I don't want to grow up and get married, and settle down to one long sermon."

She rose to her feet impulsively, and began to unfasten the boat with nervous fingers. Cresson's face grew pale.

"That, at least, I don't deserve," he said grimly.

"You force me to say bitter things," she told him, "in self-defence."

She stepped lightly into the boat and stood with

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the oar in her hand, guiding it while the distance rapidly widened between them.

"Josephine!" he called. She did not turn, and he felt, with a sinking of the heart, that he was losing her forever. He watched her graceful figure and bright head, swaying with the motion of the boat, until a change of the current swept her from his view. There came to him a realisation of profound loss and silence. This was the culmination of his protests, and their first serious quarrel. He took it tragically, and assumed that the suffering was all his.

But further down the stream, her boat moored to the bank, Josephine sat with her chin resting on the palm of her hand and her eyes turned toward the screen of bushes between them. If he would only follow and overtake her, there was something she might tell him, a secret, innocent enough, if he could only see its innocence. It was really this that kept them apart, she reflected; it was this that had caused her nervous outbreak. They could never understand each other while this remained untold; and yet, would he understand? She gazed at the wall of bushes, as if waiting for the answer of his coming. But the branches were unshaken, save for the breeze, and the momentary alighting of a thrush, who glanced curiously at the intruder and then flew further into the woods.

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Cresson retraced his steps forlornly, and began to ascend the hill from which she had come to meet him. He too had a secret, but it was of such long standing, so much a part of his life, that it had grown like an encrustation over his conscience. He had long ago decided that it must be kept from the world, and he had made no exception in favour of the woman he loved, never dreaming the loss to himself and her.

He went over the recent scene in his mind, and was willing to admit his lack of tact, perhaps his cruelty in this particular instance, though he surrendered nothing of his main position. He now saw the pathos of her reception at his hands, how he had dashed her bright mood and ruined her day. It was not in this way, he told himself, that he would reconcile her to the Church, from which inherited scepticism held her aloof. This was the first sign of her interest, and he had quenched the smoking flax.

Later, as he lingered on the sunny hilltop, talking with Perillo and Angeloro and Fabietti, he was ready to admit further that it was not from such good, hard-working men as these that she had anything to fear. Nevertheless, her resentment was still inexplicable to him. Was not his anxiety for her safety the greatest compliment he could pay her, and a proof of his love?

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Gradually, watching the growing cavity at his feet, his interest in the work became absorbing and brought its consolation. He began to see the church as it would stand completed, facing south and west, its pinnacled tower rising above the roofs that would come climbing up the hill, an object of beauty, seen across the strip of parkland from the opposite height, and from the windows of passing trains.

Cresson would undoubtedly have been an architect of unusual merit, had he chosen that profession. The subject of architecture in relation to landscape was a hobby with him, and in imagination he crowned every effective hilltop with a tower. Had Fate suddenly endowed him with unlimited means, he would probably have caused the Bronx to be known as the borough of beautiful churches, even though they outran the needs of the population for a generation; so firm was his conviction of the persuasive eloquence of sermons in stone.

When once more in the lowlands of the park, the dream with which he had drugged his pain began to vanish. The day became garish and oppressive. By contrast, he pictured the cool, sequestered stream where Josephine had disappeared. He was tempted to go in search of her, but the thought that she had probably returned home restrained him. There was a touch of embarrassment in meeting her in

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the presence of her father, who knew nothing as yet of their brief engagement. This secrecy had been imposed upon him, against his wish, by Josephine; and he wondered now whether it were ever to be broken.

On his desk in his room he found a memorandum of things to be done that day: the calls to be made, the letters to be written. He had so far forgotten his unexpected guest and future housemate that the sight of a small silver matchbox lying on the table struck him with surprise. He examined it with casual interest, thinking that the owl's face and the lotos leaves of the design were somehow appropriate to the owner. The fact that the initials G. B. failed to correspond to his guest's name made only a momentary impression on his mind. The true explanation of the discrepancy was the last that would have occurred to him, had he given the matter thought.

He threw the trinket down and stood gazing from the window, not at the hilltop, but at the spot where the Faile mansion was concealed. The time would be short before the thinning foliage disclosed the low octagonal tower between the branches. Last winter he had seen it for the first time as something strange. Would it be strange to him when it came once more into his landscape? Was his love destined not to outlast even one leafage of the trees?

CHAPTER V

DUSKY PEREGRINATIONS

BERWYN sat in the railroad train, bound for the city, and grappled with the unusual problem of ways and means. The question of making a living, should he ever be obliged to do so, had held a theoretical interest for him in other days. He had thought that he might teach, or write ; for of business he knew practically nothing. Now he saw that his choice was still further narrowed by the necessity of remaining unknown. The prerequisite for a teaching position was publicity ; so he turned at once to the other possibility.

He could write a book, and perhaps sell it, though he suspected that the kind of literature he had produced hitherto, for his own diversion, would scarcely have a marketable value. There must be a long period of work, with the chance of failure at the end, and meanwhile his supply of money was running low.

Had it not been for Berwyn's hobby of carrying jewels on his person, he would long since have been obliged to make himself known, or to try the experiment he now contemplated. Stones of colour had

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been his mania, though he never wore them. Their use to him was purely as a stimulus to his fancy. Whenever he wished to write, he locked the door, emptied the little bag upon the table, and ranged his rubies, his emeralds, and his amethysts before him, lifting them to the sun from time to time for their flashes of inspiration. His manuscripts were all gone now, lost in the sea, and the last jewel that had inspired them was sold. If he were to write once more, it must be with a steel pen and under the spur of necessity, not poetry of artificial construction, but vital prose which the average man would read and pay for.

The logic of the situation led to the newspaper; yet reportorial assignments would take him almost inevitably into his own set, whose concerns were supposed to be of special interest to the rest of the world. He must try his hand as a free lance at occasional articles and stories, and sell them, so to speak, over the counter. This method made the greater appeal to his untrammelled nature. He could choose his own subjects and times of work. The first thing to be done was to see an editor, and to lay his proposition before him.

By the time he reached the Grand Central Station, Berwyn had mapped out his course of action. His instinct was to take a cab and to drive at once to his destination, but with his foot on the step he

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paused. This was now an extravagance. He was to be one of the world's workers, and must live accordingly. The thought was an humorous one, but he obeyed it, and followed the crowd up the stairway to the elevated train. He was still only playing with the realities; he was still swimming with a life preserver ready to his hand in case of need.

The marching columns of workers had scarcely thinned when he stood on the bridge which extends from the elevated platform to City Hall Park and looked down Nassau Street. The thoroughfare presented itself to his eyes as a deep gorge cut in the solid rock, the summits of the cliffs touched by the sun, which had not yet climbed high enough to reach the hurrying heads below. He entertained the odd fancy that these people had been walking thus for ages, until finally they had worn their pathway down to its present level.

After two years of absence, he was moved by patriotic appreciation of this achievement of human energy, so strange as to seem the phantasm of some dreamer's mind. Here was a sight new in the world; and if these towering buildings were reared at the dictates of trade, it was still true that the effect was one of a tremendous, though unconscious, art, an art that made its impression by the bizarre and the fantastic. Here was force raised from the

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brutal to the sublime. And not Doré himself, in his most imaginative pictures of mediæval Paris, had equalled these lights and shades.

The very intensity and sureness of the universal action now reduced Berwyn to quietude. This scene reminded him of the growth and decay of ancient cities whose ruins he had visited, rising cloudlike in his imagination. So rapid seemed the progress from change to change that the broken roof-lines and towers appeared to shift and tumble against the sky, unsubstantial as smoke.

His immobility presently made him feel conspicuous. An impulse seized him to join in the movement below, less for the purpose of carrying out his plan than because of sudden panic. He experienced the hallucination of a hand upon his shoulder, and turned, as if the touch had been real. As he walked away, he recalled a story he had once read of a citizen of London who hid from his family in a neighbouring street for twenty years, watching them, himself undiscovered. Was such a thing possible? Time would show. But he felt that the most elaborate precautions might be of no avail against the million combinations of chance, while, on the other hand, he might be reckless with impunity. Though innocent of crime, his experiment had already brought this interesting result, that he knew the psychology of the refugee from justice.

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Here was Newspaper Row, yet he scarcely knew where to begin, whom to ask for, or what to propose. He decided to wait till night, when the morning edition would be preparing, and the chance of meeting an acquaintance in the office would be reduced to a minimum.

This postponement was entirely congenial to him. While a few hours of dreaming remained, he was content to let actualities take care of themselves. His pace, when he reached the street, was the leisurely pace of the experienced tourist. He was a pedestrian of endurance, and he started off on a long wandering, bent upon visiting those relics of old New York in Varick Street, in Greenwich, and in Chelsea, which had been familiar to the eyes of his ancestors.

The experience was vaguely depressing. The region which he had thought so new, against the background of buried cities, now seemed even more irrevocably a part of the past. When he stood at gaze before the dingy, pillared doorway of a fine old house fronting the brick walls which covered what had once been St. John's Square, he reflected how completely men's memorials perish with them. He could no longer be sure that this was the house once pointed out to him as the place in which his father was born. A group of dirty Italian children playing up and down the worn stone steps addressed

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him impudently in American slang. He threw them some small change, nevertheless, because of their dark eyes, and moved away.

An hour later he sat in an old tavern on Duane Street, wedged in between lofty buildings, and mused over his mug of ale of the days when this inn stood in green fields at the edge of the town, offering refreshment to travellers coming across the ferry. It was the sight of college flags on the walls that drove him on before the hour of noon. Evidently, young graduates, with a taste for the American antique combined with English chops and ale, had made the place their own. He dared discovery by remaining.

From Duane Street he passed northward, and rested finally on the still deserted campus of the General Theological Seminary. This place, more than any other he had seen in his native land, reminded him of London and the Inner Temple. He hunted up an attendant and gained admission to the chapel, where he lingered for some time, studying each detail of mosaic and stained glass with appreciative eyes. He had not known that the Church in America had developed such taste; and he went back to his lounging-place, carrying that atmosphere of beauty with him.

There was something in Berwyn's nature akin to the decadent spirit of that group of minor Eng-

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lish poets who loved to linger in cabmen's shelters, to haunt the water front, and to drink bad liquors in the pothouses of the East End. He knew Montmartre well. In Brussels at the time of the Kermesse, in Naples at the Carnival, he had accumulated those experiences which left their sinister record about his eyes. He might himself have written Dowson's stanza of despair : —

Let be at last; give over words and sighing,
Vainly were all things said:
Better at last to find a place for lying,
Only dead.

But Berwyn was saved from writing such dirges as these by a realisation of their futility, even as art. He admitted that he had handled Sophoclean themes inadequately, and that not all the jewels in the world could supply him with sufficient inspiration, by their suggestions of mystery and light. It was just as well that Fate had removed the artificial from his method. He accepted the omen, and questioned it further.

The softened, vast murmur of the streets beyond the peaceful square answered him. He would interpret his city in terms of reality; and who should do it better than he, whose roots were embedded so deeply in its soil? His apparently aimless curiosity in revisiting the scenes of his family's history had, after all, a meaning. A setting was found for the

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tales he meant to write. His renunciation still left room for verses, for the hope of voicing the echoes that came to his ears ; but these should be the ornaments of his literary scheme, like the figures that adorn the entablature of a temple.

Though the air was that of midsummer, the leaves of the elms already presaged a change; and he recalled those Septembers when he had taken the Fall River boat on his way back to Harvard, filled with high resolves. The work he planned was never accomplished. He merely appreciated and absorbed, and forged the links of charming friendships. Now the old conviction that work was worth while, and that he could do it, returned. He arose to complete his pilgrimage by an inspection of his own house, wondering whether his uncle had rented it, or whether it remained closed and tenantless.

The brown stone mansion was as he had left it, the upper windows boarded, even the curtains in the basement drawn. Where was the old servant he had left in charge? Had she added one more to the long list of deaths he remembered, or was she too feeble to sweep the drifting dust from the steps?

Berwyn leaned against an iron hydrant by the curb and glanced up and down Fifth Avenue; at the Washington Arch a few blocks to the south,

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at the two Gothic towers on the north, unchanged as yet against that changing skyline. The Church of the Ascension had been fashionable in his boyhood, and the record of baptisms in the parish register held his own name. But to this fact, even if he were aware of it, he gave no thought.

The contemplation of the house restored his sense of ownership, so that he was tempted to ring the area bell and to investigate the state of affairs. He was wrestling with his impulse when he became aware of the stopping of a motor car at the stone block directly in front of the gate, and but a few feet to his left. He remained with arms folded, his head sunk on his breast, convinced, he knew not why, that one of the chances he had anticipated had come, and that to turn and look was to be discovered.

For that very reason he was madly desirous to turn. The sensation to himself, and to the occupants of the car, would be something to remember for a lifetime. It was no surprise to him when, in spite of the throbbing of the machine, he recognised the voice of the man who spoke.

"Well, what do you think of it?"

Berwyn waited curiously for the answer; it was given by a woman.

"I don't know, Jack. It's roomy, and on a corner, with a southern exposure. We might try

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it, but it's frightfully old-fashioned and down town."

"It is," the man assented; "but there's a stable where I could keep the machine, and a nice garden at the back. One doesn't get so much elbow room now-a-days in the city. I thought it would be jolly to take it for the winter. Here we are, two months from our wedding, and we don't know where we're going to live. I wonder you ever made up your mind to take me, Grace; you find it so hard to make up your mind on this question."

"I might unmake my mind on the first subject, if you're not careful," the girl answered.

They both laughed, and Berwyn suspected that their hands met. He doubted if their self-absorption had even allowed them to observe his proximity. The woman's identity was disclosed by the mention of her name. This must be Grace Spedding. So she had landed good-natured Jack Barney at last, he reflected, with amusement.

"I think, on the whole, I prefer apartments," she resumed, "if you don't mind. I'm sure the place is filled with horrid, old-fashioned things. It would be dreadfully gloomy. What's the use of going through it?"

"Just as you say, Gracie girl." There was a pause, during which Berwyn heard the jingle of keys shoved back into the man's pocket. He

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was listening intently for some mention of himself, though he found room for appreciation of Jack's affectionate diminutive. Now he was rewarded.

"I used to have great times in that old place. Berwyn brought the bunch down from Cambridge one Christmas recess, and we raised the roof. His governor was scandalised — "

He was turning the machine as he spoke, and the rest of the sentence was lost. In another moment they were gone.

Berwyn remained immovable for some time, absorbed in cynical reflections. It was not that he had heard anything actually heartless about himself in that youthful reminiscence; what hurt was that Jack Barney could contemplate spending his honeymoon in his old friend's house, undeterred by a ghost of the past. Berwyn felt that it was not a fine thing to plan; but Jack was unimaginative, and facts were facts.

The incident made him realise how utterly he had become a dead man out of mind. He seemed to have passed without leaving even a shadow of regret behind, to soften the mood of those who had known him. It was this bitter knowledge that gave edge to his resolution and an unaccustomed vigour to his step as he turned away. There are many men who achieve success because of their native

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gifts of mind and heart, and many more from sheer industry; but the uninitiated would be surprised could they know the number that have been stimulated to effort by small rivalries or personal pique.

CHAPTER VI

A FATAL IMPULSE

THE following evening Berwyn returned to the Bronx. He walked up from the elevated train, weary and depressed. What strange place was this, and to what strange company had he committed himself? His experiment had lost its first glamour. The editor had told him that he might write up the Bronx, and that his stuff would be paid for, if it proved readable. There were old estates, foreign colonies, picturesque elements, north of the river, which could be described, perhaps in the form of stories. As for the historic spots on Manhattan Island, they had been done time and again. With this advice, the editor had turned abruptly to the proof before him, and his visitor had slipped away unnoticed, realising that whether he ever came back was a matter of consequence only to himself.

The nebulous inspiration had failed to assume definite shape in his mind; the fool's dream had vanished. He really did not know why he was returning to the Bronx at all, unless it were for a few days of rest and reflection. Had he not purchased some furniture before his interview with the editor,

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he would probably have given up his plan entirely. The disturbing thought occurred to him that his uncle might not keep his fortune intact much longer. The architect did not need it for himself, and was a man of public spirit. Unless Berwyn made himself known soon, he might experience the sensation of seeing his estate converted into a library, a college dormitory, or a hospital.

The suburb now seemed not so much refreshing as oppressive. His thoughts became voices, heard distinctly in that comparative silence. The dark roll of the parkland to the east, the vast spaces of the sky overhead, suggested an infinitude from which he shrunk. He longed for a closed room, and lights, and good cheer, and companionship.

As he ascended the stairs, he heard the strains of Cresson's violin floating down the hall. He found the musician sitting by the window, looking out over the park, wandering from one cadence to another, his head and shoulders bulking big against the sky. Cresson got up at the interruption, put away his violin, and lighted the gas.

"Are you exorcising evil spirits here in the twilight?" Berwyn asked him.

"Yes, and without much success," the other answered. "I'm glad to see you back. Your desk and things came this afternoon."

He led the way to the front of the house, lighting

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the gas-jets in the hall as he went. Berwyn began to feel his welcome, and the whole complexion of his mood changed. There was something very friendly in his companion's interest in his purchases. They discussed the merits of the desk, and its location, while Berwyn unwrapped one by one a box of typewriting paper, pens and penholder, a brass inkwell, and a quart bottle of ink. He ranged the objects on the polished surface of the desk, tried his chair critically, and looked up with his transforming gleam of humour.

"There's nothing inadequate in these preparations, is there, Cresson?" he demanded.

"I know where to come to borrow ink, at any rate."

"Now if you can tell me where they sell ideas," Berwyn resumed, "I'll go shopping again to-morrow."

"The way to begin to write a book is to begin it," Cresson remarked oracularly. "At least, that's the way I do with a sermon. After writing a great deal of stuff and nonsense, I find something there that seems worth saying — till I've said it. But I thought you told me you had a subject."

"So I did, but I'm ashamed to name it. That subject has been consigned to the bottom of the sea." Berwyn enjoyed stating this actual fact with impunity, as a metaphor.

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"You understand Italian, don't you?" his companion asked. "Why not pump the Dagoes working on my church, find out their histories, and write them up?"

To his surprise, the jest was taken seriously; but when Berwyn had declared that he meant to accept the suggestion, his sense of absurdity returned.

"When I contemplate the enormous labour I mean to perform in this room, I feel so virtuous that I can hardly stand it. They say that well begun is half done. Now, since my work is half accomplished, it might be well to celebrate it at once in a bottle of ale. There's no telling whether we shall have an opportunity to celebrate the other half."

Both men had been depressed, and both experienced the resilience of spirit which comes from a good meal in congenial company. Berwyn recounted his wanderings, — dusky peregrinations, he called them, — making them appear the exploring expedition of a comparative stranger in the city.

"Did you visit the Ghetto?" Cresson asked him.

"Not in New York. I like to go where I can converse with the people, and I don't understand Yiddish. Do you?"

"I know two dialects only," Cresson answered. "There's more than one kind of Yiddish, — Russian and German, and so forth. The Yiddish lan-

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guage is merely a transliteration of some other tongue into Hebrew characters, so that to understand German Yiddish, for example, you must know German. I was surprised to find, the last time I went down to the Ghetto, that they were developing an American variety. It's a pity so few of the younger generation of Jews can read or speak their own ancient language. We've lighted upon a hobby of mine. Some time we'll go down there together, if you like—to the theatre, the synagogues, and the restaurants."

"I should like nothing better," Berwyn assented with alacrity, wondering what might be the next revelation of his new friend's versatility. "I noticed your Hebrew Bible when I first came in here, and did you the injustice to suppose it a mere ornament, left over from seminary days. I had always understood that the language was fugacious, and that very little of it was required of the clergy."

"Precious little, as a rule," Cresson admitted, with a smile. "There's a tradition that the Oxford examinations used to consist of one question, What is the Hebrew word for God? But I took up the study out of curiosity in my undergraduate days at Columbia, long before any thought of the ministry, or of preparing for canonical examinations, came into my head." He reached out and took the

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Hebrew Bible from its rack. "Would you like to hear a fine ode?"

Berwyn listened intently to the reading, catching the rhythm and sonorousness of the words, and wondering at their meaning. Nor was he severe upon the reader's vanity in his accomplishment. He was too much of a scholar in his own line not to appreciate this exhibition, though given unsolicited.

"What is it all about?" he asked, when the passage was finished.

"The song of Deborah and Barak, in the Book of Judges."

"I ought to know it better," Berwyn confessed.

Cresson reread certain passages, translating them afterward, his eyes bright with enthusiasm; and his listener caught fire.

"If I were a Jew," he declared, "with all my nation's wealth of temperament and history behind me, I'd be so proud of the fact that you could n't touch me with a ten-foot pole."

"I suppose no more inspiring pæan of victory was ever written," Cresson returned; "but as for your pride in the event you mention, I doubt it." He put the volume back in its place and went to the mantel for his pipe. "By the way, here is your matchbox. You left it behind you."

"I feared I had lost it," Berwyn said. His own

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initials stared up at him from the trinket in his hand. "Not that it has any special value in itself, but it belonged to a friend of mine who is dead."

He lighted a cigarette with a consciousness of having achieved another Delphic saying, both true and false. "I meant to ask you about that incident of yesterday morning," he continued. "I hope no one was hurt up there on the hill."

A hint of reserve crept like a shadow across Cresson's face, but his reply was frank.

"That turned out to be one of the girls of my congregation, who took it into her head to set off the first blast. I was afraid those Italians might annoy her."

Berwyn did not quite venture to voice his reflection that the religious emotions of young girls are apt to centre in the personality of athletic young rectors. He was gratified at this confirmation of his own perspicacity in detecting a romance, and gave the conversation another drift.

"I don't believe she ran any danger, except possibly from flying stones. Italians take the American girl as they find her, a privileged character. Those workmen are dangerous only to each other. In fact, I must confess to a great liking for the Italians. I never see a band of the poor devils trudging to their work without feeling that they are the remnants of Cæsar's marching legions."

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The subject was a fertile one, and they threshed it out with all the eagerness of new acquaintances who had not yet learned each other's views on many matters. Anecdotes and theories followed each other in interesting succession ; but Cresson seemed restless, nevertheless, and rose from time to time to pace the floor.

"Suppose we go up to take a look at the excavation for the church," he suggested finally. "It's too fine a night to stay indoors. The moon will be up in an hour, and light our way back."

Berwyn assented readily, and they went out into the street together. They retraced the way they had first taken, after the meeting in the cemetery, having the lowlands of the park on their right, beyond which the checkerboard of streets was now visible in lines of gas-jets. On the left, a huge wall of rock rose gradually higher as the street descended to Gun Hill Road.

Berwyn's earlier weariness was gone. He enjoyed the refreshment of the cool night and the nearness of nature, now that he had a companion to share it ; and he listened with interest to a description of the region beyond the tracks,—the French colony, the Gobelin tapestry works, the Italian settlement farther north, Sormani's Park, and the famous Hermitage which a popular author had already made the scene of a short story. Presently they crossed

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the railroad and the river, turning eastward up the main street of the village.

"And here's the grain of mustard seed," his guide announced suddenly, pausing and pointing to an upper room above a grocery store. At the foot of the stairway a small sign elucidated his meaning: ST. BASIL'S-IN-THE-BRONX.

"That's an alliterative name," Berwyn commented. He was a little abashed by this humble beginning, and at a loss for something appreciative to say.

"I've become attached to that room," the rector told him, as they resumed their walk. "It reminds me of the 'upper chamber' which the disciples secured for the last supper. That was not much more imposing, I fancy. There were probably no architectural glories, no splendid golden goblets. It illustrates how Christ always chose the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."

Berwyn was unable to follow him here, and entertained a slight misgiving that he might be obliged to listen to a professional discourse with which he could not agree, while courtesy kept him tongue-tied. But nothing of the kind happened. Whether from pride or dignity, the clergyman failed to enlarge upon his theme. They turned southward once more, and began to climb the long hill that

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led to the new site, in a silence that was prophetic.

When they reached their destination, Berwyn found the view unexpectedly impressive. His gaze travelled beyond the mysterious meadowlands of the park, and on to the shadowy dome of the museum above the trees to the south. On the horizon the city glowed faintly, like the promise of another moonrise.

Cresson descended into the excavation, and sitting there on a broken rock, he talked with his companion above about the difficulties of his undertaking and his way of meeting them. This was once more the man who had displayed his knowledge of Hebrew, his listener reflected; no longer the self-sacrificing missionary, but clever, ambitious, hungry for appreciation, determined to make his mark in the world, and guilty at times of a touch of boastfulness.

He climbed back to the rim presently and stood silent, not following the author's gaze across the park, but looking toward that spot to the southeast where a light among the trees disclosed the location of Josephine's house. It seemed a long time since their misunderstanding on the morning of the previous day. He had gone to the house in the meantime, but had failed to find her. Now he wished he were alone, that he might adventure it again; but

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what was he to do with his companion? Suddenly he had an inspiration. This apparent disadvantage might serve to give him the very opportunity he desired.

“There’s just one man in this region,” he said abruptly, “who would probably interest you,— Mr. Faile, a retired judge, who lives down there by the park. He’s good company, and plays an excellent game of billiards. Even though it is a little late, we might call on him now. He never goes to bed early, and would be glad to see us.”

“That sounds attractive,” Berwyn assented.

They began to pick their way down the hillside in the direction of the light. Meanwhile the moon, which for some time had been a conflagration behind the tangled branches of the trees, seemed slowly to concentrate and condense as it rose, until, by the time they had reached the lower ground, it floated miraculously, a perfect sphere, in the sky above.

CHAPTER VII

JOSEPHINE ENTERS LATE

INSTEAD of entering the woods, Cresson led the way to the road that passed the front of the house. The descent from the hilltop, with its consequent loss of view, seemed to have carried them a hundred miles from the metropolis. Here were only country sounds: the rhythmic churring of locusts, the barking of dogs, and the querulous cluck of a fowl settling down comfortably for the night. Yet the road itself illustrated the prevailing confusion of urban and rural. Unpaved, and raised some four or five feet above the stone sidewalk, it was flanked by rail fences, placed there, no doubt, to prevent somnolent horses and drunken drivers from plunging down the bank on their way home from the city. The gas lamps were here too, emphasising the solitude by their illumination.

At a passing breeze, which sent a vast whispering through the branches above them, Berwyn bared his head gratefully. He recalled with distaste his explorations of the previous day and night through worn and crowded streets, filled with dust that seemed nothing else than the drifting ashes of dead generations.

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A faint, musical tinkling became audible down the road, and the clacking hubs of a waggon. The lantern on the seat of the vehicle now appeared around a bend, disclosing, as it approached, a weary horse, a nodding driver, and a swaying strap of little bells hanging between two upright sticks above a congeries of cheap merchandise.

"Even the ragman seems romantic in this setting," Berwyn commented.

"The man's name is Piano," Cresson told him. "Appropriate, isn't it? You will hear him some morning calling for old rags and bottles in a clear tenor voice of such pathos that it suggests a lost love. And I like his bells."

"Then you do concede something to the Italians, after all?" Berwyn queried.

"Musically? Not very much. I can't endure the Italian opera. It's too simple and unintellectual, too monotonously emotional; but I enjoy a few notes, heard through closed windows, above the noises of the street. The Italian voice has a curious timbre. There's a license and abandon in it that stirs the blood. But a dog fight does that."

"Such a comparison is sheer perversity," Berwyn protested. "Besides, I might say *de te fabula*. Your own music is about as wild as anything I have heard this side of Hungary. You remind me of those pretty women who have settled down into

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good wives, and are particularly severe on the failings of their sex."

"However that may be," Cresson answered triumphantly, "my violin put you to sleep, by your own confession. But here we are."

A gravel path led down to the Faile mansion, which spread dimly behind the trees, partly disclosed by the climbing moon. It seemed a large house, even enormous, compared with the small wooden dwellings of Williamsbridge; and for this reason it was all the more melancholy and mysterious. Only two lights shone from its many windows, one in the ground-floor room to the right of the entrance, and one in the octagonal tower. It was this latter which Cresson had seen from the hilltop, and it was to this that he now turned his gaze. Josephine had told him that she slept there because she loved the sound of the wind in the branches and the first notes of the birds on summer mornings. The light was turned down, and he augured from this fact that he would find her in the room below.

"Tell me whom I am to meet here," Berwyn said. "If the people are half as interesting as the house, they will be well worth knowing."

"The judge will be sure to be at home," his guide told him, "and Mrs. Faile, too. But you'll not see her to-night, because she's a confirmed invalid, and appears only in the afternoons, wheeled

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by the maid from room to room, or out on to the verandah, when the weather is pleasant. I've seen her only a few times myself. Then there is the daughter."

"She ought to be both young and beautiful," Berwyn remarked, "for such a Brontë setting."

Without committing himself on this subject, Cresson led the way down the path and rang the bell. He was obliged to ring a second time before a shadow darkened the figured glass, and the master of the house himself appeared.

"Come in, Cresson," he said, when his steady gaze had discovered his guest. "I'm glad to see you've brought a friend with you."

He shifted his smoking briarwood pipe to his left hand, and gave them welcome with a charm and dignity which recalled the time when manners had more to do with making the man than they have to-day. His discerning eyes and deliberate speech gave Berwyn an uneasy moment. The name of Le Strange by which he was introduced was still so new to his own ears that he felt his host must know it to be an *alias*, though his duty to a guest might cause him to conceal the knowledge. In reality, these disquieting characteristics had been a valuable asset to Mr. Faile when he sat on the bench. Now, as he relieved the young men of their hats and expressed his pleasure at this interruption of his lone-

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liness, he was estimating the stranger's quality to the extent of divining a kindred spirit. He must have been much like Berwyn in his youth, despite his present carelessness in dress, a carelessness which bespoke the growing indifference of a recluse to the opinion of the world. He led the way into the large room on the right, and pushed two easy-chairs into the circle of lamplight about the table.

"I hope you gentlemen will smoke," he began hospitably, "though I have nothing here but pipe tobacco."

Cresson lighted a pipe, and Berwyn offered the judge a cigarette, disclosing in his very manner of doing it something of that kinship between them which Cresson had predicted. He was pleased to see that the two enjoyed each other's society; it promised well for his plan, should Josephine appear. But where was she? This question occupied his mind to such an extent that he took little part in the conversation. Was she, after all, in her tower room?

The sight of a jointed bamboo fishing-rod among the litter of objects on the table led Berwyn to enquire whether trout were still to be found in the Bronx River.

"I caught my last trout in that stream about forty years ago," the judge answered. "Now I go a hundred miles to find them. This was a beautiful

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place once. We used to hunt and fish all over the region."

Before long he was showing his book of artificial flies and discussing the lore of the sport, stimulated by a new listener. It was a wornout theme to Cresson, and he glanced restlessly about the room, recalling each time he had been there with Josephine ; few times they were, and only twice alone. Yet everything here was invested with romantic interest because of her. Those four fresco portraits in the four corners of the ceiling — Shakespeare, Goethe, Scott, and Irving — had looked down upon her all her life. He pictured her first steps here. Perhaps she had steadied herself with tiny hand against each piece of old furniture his eyes rested upon. And so he drew on his imagination, watching her development, until she was tall enough to see her beauty reflected in the large pier glass above the marble mantel. What books in the rows of shelves had her fingers touched? How often had she appeared between the heavy, velvet, maroon-coloured curtains that separated this room from the room beyond, thrusting them aside in her impulsive fashion ?

It was natural that Cresson should forget the older brothers and sisters, of whom he had only heard, for they were dead, mere ghosts now to the old man who sat in his easy-chair discussing the sport

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he loved; to the young man even less than that. But an excursion through the house would have disclosed their sad memorials: silk gowns hidden away in deep cedar chests, never to be taken out again; children's toys in an abandoned nursery; on the shelves of this very room Anthon's Homer and Cicero and Horace, inscribed on the flyleaf with the name of the judge's favourite son, written in his own blood, as a boastful clause would inform the reader, — a somewhat ghastly fad of that particular generation of collegians.

Had Cresson known all this, or possessed the constructive imagination to body it forth, he might perhaps have understood the bringing up which had made Josephine what she was. It was not the lack of means entirely that had deprived her of those advantages which her older brothers and sisters had enjoyed; it was rather her father's bitter acquiescence in the decrees of fate. Let her be free, and grow up as she would. He had almost a superstitious conviction that his care would be mocked in her case, as it had been before, and that to prepare her for life was to deprive her of the chance of living. It was his wife, more indomitable than he, who had given her what training she possessed.

Presently Cresson arose and wandered aimlessly about the room, craving action in his suspense.

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"I did n't tell you, judge," he announced at last, "that my friend plays an excellent game of billiards."

"I'm delighted to hear it," the judge answered. "We must have a game. Mr. Le Strange, the dominie himself used to do something with the cue, I suspect, before he joined the sacred circle, but his play has fallen off. I had a clerical friend once who went fishing with me on Ascension Day, forgetting that he had a professional engagement. The clergy have deteriorated since my youth. Now they fish only for men."

"He would be a hardy fisherman who ventured to angle for you, judge," Cresson retorted.

"I've done my duty by the Church," the old man returned, with a chuckle. "Did n't I sell the bishop a beautiful site for the cathedral of St. Basil-in-the-Bronx, my last remaining piece of desirable real estate, at a ruinously reasonable sum?"

He led the way through the heavy curtains, and lighted the gas in the room beyond. Berwyn, following, had an immediate impression of the nearness of the woods outside; for his entrance was greeted by a faint rustling of wings and a drowsy chirping. The flutter subsided in a moment, and he saw with surprise a row of bird cages, two beside each window, hooded for the night.

"My daughter's aviary," his host explained.

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"She cares more for those birds than for anything else in the world. Some time you must let her show them to you. Personally, it strikes me as an uncanny taste, though I'm fond of birds in their proper place."

Afterward Berwyn had cause to recall with some amusement the impression of Miss Faile conveyed to his mind by this incident, perhaps by her father's description of her fad as uncanny. He imagined a woman like little Miss Flyte, and wondered whether she too had given her pets fantastic names. But he was less interested in that shadowy personality than in the old house itself, which he was gradually exploring. In a curious way it was all one with its owner; and as the room they had left spoke of study and refinement, so this one suggested a public resort, with its large, green table, the stiff row of chairs along the wall, and the rack of cues.

During the ensuing hours Berwyn was intermittently haunted by a sense of strangeness and unreality. His host's conversation, wise and racy by turns; Cresson's abstracted face, his unexpected winning of the series without the exhilaration such a man might be expected to show; the odd proximity of clicking balls, tobacco smoke, and toddies to the silent mystery of moonlight without; the presence somewhere in the house of an unregarded

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invalid and an enigmatical daughter, — these things set the evening apart in his experience.

He was thinking that the hour must be late, when the curtains of the wide door swayed as in a stronger draught, parted unexpectedly, and closed again behind a figure so different from the Miss Faile of his previous fancy that he almost doubted her father's introduction. He had not pictured a beauty, or a woman of the world ; and it occurred to him that she divined his astonishment and enjoyed it, as she extended her hand to him with impulsive friendliness across the intervening table.

"I fear we are keeping your mother awake with our game, Miss Faile," he ventured, "and that you have come to turn us out."

His preconceived notion that she had spent the evening at her mother's bedside suggested his first remark. A moment later he was conscious of the fact that the touch of her fingers was cool, and that her colour was brilliant, as if she had brought something of the fresh night with her into the room.

Josephine glanced at her father, who stood, cue in hand, with a comical air of having been brought to book, and laughed.

"Fortunately my mother's room is too far off to be reached by the sound of billiard balls," she said. "I was thinking of my birds."

"With whom I dispute the possession of my

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favourite haunt," the judge supplemented, as he began to restore the cues to their places in the rack. "Human beings have some rights, Josephine?"

Too much absorbed to notice his sarcasm, or the challenge of his rising inflection, she hovered solicitously at each cage, lifting the covering lightly, much as a young mother might peep at a sleeping child. Her progress was attended by a drowsy twittering that seemed a friendly greeting and good-night.

Berwyn, who noted all things, was peculiarly alive to this scene; the outward effect, even to the detail of her exquisite gown, and the inward suggestion. He was well aware of a situation between Cresson and this girl, and the sense of something familiar which her first dramatic entrance had given him was gradually confirmed. It flashed upon him suddenly that here was none other than the figure on the hilltop which had aroused in Cresson's mind such solicitude, and in his own the suspicion of a romance. The suspicion became a certainty at sight of his friend's discomfiture. He had not thought that Cresson could ever lose his assurance; but he lost it in her first cool greeting of him, and even more evidently when she had finished her inspection of the birds and paused to talk with him on the subject of the new church.

"You know, Mr. Le Strange," she explained,

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“that I have a kind of proprietary right in the cathedral. I set off the first blast myself.”

With instinctive tact Berwyn did not let her know that he had witnessed the achievement, but contented himself with some commonplace remark concerning the effectiveness of the site.

Her reference to the church as a cathedral was a shot that made Cresson wince. This was her father's jest, now, for the first time, appropriated by her. The tables were turned. Where was the tempestuous girl who had showed her lover how deeply his disapproval hurt? She had even seemed pathetic in her anger. Now she was like one who had triumphed, but not vindictively or personally. She appeared exhilarated by circumstances in which he had no concern, so that she launched the arrow, as it were, in sheer good spirits.

It was this impression which he carried away with him. Something had happened since their last meeting to give her a new brilliancy and poise. It increased her fascination over him, and he saw that his companion, notwithstanding his guarded speech, had been impressed. What if it were his presence there that had caused the change? This was the first time that Cresson had ever seen her under such circumstances. He realised how little they had seen of life together, as the world goes, how little in consequence he really knew her, and his heart misgave him.

CHAPTER VIII

OPENING PRISON BARS

ON the following afternoon Cresson found Josephine ensconced among the cushions of her swinging seat, behind the vines, on the deep verandah. As he came around the corner of the house, he heard the slow creaking of the chains by which the swing was suspended from the roof above, and his pulses beat painfully at the sound. He knew that this interview would be momentous in their relationship. He came up the steps, and looked down the shadowed vista. There she sat alone, at the far end, reading. The chance of interruption seemed remote. The curtain of her father's sitting-room, which commanded a view of the verandah, was drawn. Had she wished to be caught in that secluded corner, she could not have planned the situation more carefully.

As a matter of fact, she had so planned it; but now that he had come, her manner betrayed no sweet sense of triumph. She thrust the book hurriedly among the cushions, concealed the little foot with which she had been swinging herself against the railing, and smiled up at him nervously.

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It was so much easier to imagine a dispassionate talk with him beforehand than to remember now what she had intended to say. Her thoughts flew this way and that, and left her helpless. She had fought the battle through alone, and had won it quite to her satisfaction, much as the Platonic reasoner was accustomed to vanquish an interlocutor of straw.

But Cresson was very real and aggressive as he came forward. His good looks were disturbing, and his first action showed his unconsciousness of his dismissal. He steadied the moving seat with one hand, and bent down to kiss her : but as she lowered her head, he kissed only her hair. Her refusal seemed to cause him no embarrassment. Instead of betraying the foolishness of a disappointed lover, he even caressed the soft hair a moment with that magnetic hand of his, whose touch she knew so well. She trembled a little, and waited ; then lifted her eyelids to see that he had taken a chair beside her.

What had become of her last night's victory ? For she had imagined that he must have understood her intention. It was always so when they were alone together, and her pride was piqued by his power. Could she be effective only with the aid of outward circumstances ?

" You must n't kiss me any more," she began,

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with a show of firmness. "I have made up my mind."

"To what, my darling?" he demanded, fixing her with glowing eyes.

"That it has all been a mistake," she answered, gaining sureness and conviction, now that there was space between them and she had found her voice.

"Because of our foolish quarrel?" he asked. "Don't say that. I have n't been happy a moment since we parted. Everything was so unnatural last night. We can't go on in that way. I've been thinking it over again and again, and I can't understand why you were not pleased, rather than offended, by my anxiety for you. I always supposed that a girl wanted her lover to be concerned for her safety; but perhaps that shows my ignorance of women?"

He put this as an interrogation, and smiled with an assurance that aroused her spirit.

"I suppose I'm not like other women, then," she answered coolly. "I know I'm not. I'm not as sweet-natured and domestic as a woman ought to be; and I'm not religious. I've heard you say that an irreligious woman is an anomaly in nature, and that religion is a woman's crowning ornament of grace. But I haven't that crowning ornament. I don't think I believe anything. I told you that before, did n't I? You see now why our engagement is a

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mistake. Our quarrel is a small matter; the important thing is that you never really knew me."

He reached out for her hand and held it, while he argued gravely. "I know you better than you know yourself. One who loves beauty as you do, and nature, and birds, must be to some extent religious."

"But you are committed to another kind of religion," she said stubbornly, — "to a book and a system. I should have to share it, if I married you, and become a partisan. I want to escape before the tyranny of it closes me in like a cage."

Cresson had discussed the Church too often with the judge not to recognise the source of the phrase "a book and a system," but the final sentence was her own.

"Tyranny," he echoed, "always tyranny? Can't you see it merely as an expression of law, a way of doing things that ensures their continuity and effectiveness? Do you think that you can escape from law, Josephine, or from the prison bars of circumstance? Is anarchy the road to freedom? Why, see how you have shut up your birds in cages; yet they sing and are happy."

She withdrew her hand, and looked at him, startled.

"It's because you know what is good for them better than they know themselves. You feed them,

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and keep them safe from harm, and they sing behind their bars. We must divine some such plan in the limitations God sets us here."

"But we are not birds!" she cried rebelliously. "You can always argue better than I, even when I'm right."

Her hands were enveloped in the blue worsted shawl which she had thrown about her shoulders, and he could not recover them. The loss of contact weakened his advantage, tempting to argument, and he yielded. It was the battle of a trained mind against the negation and revolt of youth, against a circumstance, too, which had come between them since their quarrel, and which she would not tell him, fearing his judgment. And Cresson was young enough himself to discuss religion, when only love was in question. Antagonism, keener because of their mutual attraction for each other, grew with every word. He saw his mistake when too late, and when the breach between them had widened to such an extent that it would have been a physical impossibility to reach forward and recover her hand. Finally, he became silent, and looked in despair at her profile as she stared out through the vines at the roadway beyond.

"But all this is beside the mark," he resumed, seeing his way once more. "The only question is whether you love me or not. And love is a prophecy,

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Josephine, of ultimate understanding. It is too much to expect that we should understand each other yet."

She shook her head, and sighed impatiently. This acquiescence in love's present imperfection was his undoing.

"No, I don't love you as I ought," she answered, with a little air of finality that had a touch of pathos in it, could he have seen beneath the mask. "We ought to understand each other now, if we are to be sure."

"Something has come between us," he divined, "that you will not tell me. I felt it last night, and I feel it now. Isn't that true?"

There was no answer. The moment had come for her confession, and she knew it. It was a risk she dared not take, and this, though she did not realise it, was the only proof she needed that she loved him. Had she been indifferent, his judgment would not have dismayed her.

"Do you love some one else?" he persisted, too miserable now to try to control the anxiety which shook him like a fever.

"No."

The monosyllable was almost whispered, yet it was decisive, and he believed her.

"Then what is it, my darling? Nothing else can count."

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She was alarmed for her purpose by the relief in his tone. Had he gone further, and taken her in his arms, he might have won; but the habit of the last half-hour was upon him, like a weight not fully lifted.

"Oh, it's too absurd!" she cried desperately. "It's something, and yet it's nothing, but it has changed things. I can't explain it now. Some day I will. Only, just at present, I don't want to be engaged any more. I want to be free for a time, say, for a year. Then, perhaps —"

"Don't!" he interrupted. He recovered her hand, in spite of resistance, and kissed it, leaning over and holding it against his face. Then he looked up compellingly. "Don't break off our engagement in this mood," he demanded. "I know there's some misunderstanding that will straighten itself out in time."

"Perhaps." She wavered. "If you only will not assume that we are really engaged —"

"What do you mean? To keep it a secret still?"

She nodded. "And let me do as I please."

"You cannot love me, if you impose such strange conditions," he protested.

"And you cannot love me, if you question them," she retorted.

His conception of a lover's rights involved questioning and guidance, and he had acted upon that

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conception hitherto ; but something told him now, without a shadow of doubt, that he must yield the point, or lose her entirely. Whatever it was that had come between them, it was a rival he had reason to fear. He stood up, as if pride bade him go, and hesitated ; but love was stronger.

"I agree," he said suddenly. "Only, you will let me kiss you?"

She looked about apprehensively, as he bent over her, but there was no one near ; and so he had his wish. She was merely acquiescent, however, and the hunger of his heart remained unsatisfied by the sufferance of her unresponsive lips. He received the impression that this concession was of relatively small importance, now that she had won her main point. She was so much absorbed in her own purpose as scarcely to be conscious of his action.

"And now I will show you something," she said. "Come with me."

She ran rapidly down the verandah, and the worsted shawl fell from her shoulders unheeded. He followed her, wondering, through the door, through her father's deserted study, and into the billiard-room beyond. In her haste, she outstripped him, so that the curtains closed behind her, concealing her for a few moments from his view. When he parted them, he stood transfixed.

The room was flooded with the western sunlight,

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and with fresh air from the open windows. She stood in the full glow of one of them, her tumbled hair illuminated like a yellow aureole, one of the bird cages in her hand.

"See!" she cried triumphantly. "It is empty. I have set him free. You were right; I will ask nothing for myself which I am unwilling to give. It is not for me to play Providence to them. They'll be happier now."

"No — no," he protested, "don't do that. They're accustomed to captivity. They won't know what to do with their freedom,— and winter coming on. Stop and think."

"I am thinking," she retorted bitterly. "They ought to be free, as their parents were. I took them from the nests myself when they were little."

She was passing from cage to cage with feverish rapidity, opening the doors and taking her pets in her hand for the last time, only to unclothe her fingers and let them fly away. Some, darting out into the sunlight through the wide windows, disappeared like a shadow. Others, bewildered, circled about the large room, and alighted at last upon the chandeliers. When her work was done, she turned on him defiantly, and her face was tragic.

"There!" she exclaimed, panting. "Are you satisfied?"

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"I! Why, Josephine, I never imagined such a thing!" He was deeply distressed at this strange result of his logic.

"Then why did you let me know?" she demanded stormily.

They stood looking at each other in silence, conscious of the murmuring of the trees outside, and the liquid notes of birds, some of them, no doubt, the captives of a moment since. One by one, the remaining few discovered their opportunity, and flashed by her into the perils and joys and responsibilities of freedom.

"I don't know what to say," he ventured.

"Say that I deserve the liberty I have given," she answered.

Without waiting for a reply, she left the room. He watched the curtains settle into quietness behind her, and dared not follow. After a few moments, he went through one of the windows on to the western verandah, and down the stairs into the yard. Unable to leave at once, he circled the house slowly. The blue worsted wrap was still lying, a soft heap, where it had fallen, and the swinging seat was empty. It was not here that she had gone to grieve.

CHAPTER IX

KNIGHT ERRANTRY

IN Berwyn's mind one late September day was ever to be marked with a white stone, — the day he was driven by a storm to take refuge in the builder's shed on the site of St. Basil's, where he listened to the story of Angeloro, while the long rain streaked the square of dim landscape framed by the open door. The Campanian had furnished him with a theme that needed little embellishment, a tale of love and hate and adventure strangely mediæval. Within a month, stories of Italian life, bearing the name of Philip Le Strange, were beginning to appear in the Sunday supplement of one of the great newspapers, and to attract attention as the exploitation of something hitherto little known.

On the last Wednesday of November, the author sat late at his work, and from time to time he smiled at the ease of his success. This was the fruit of mere idleness: of roadside chats with Piano, the ragman; of noonday sunnings in the company of some passing Giuseppe, leaning on the parapet of a white stone bridge in the park; of occasional

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card games in the back room of Perillo's saloon; of those apparently aimless visits to the rising walls of St. Basil's-in-the-Bronx.

He awoke in a holiday mood, and reflected that this was Thanksgiving Day. The first thing his eyes rested upon was his finished manuscript. It was the best story he had written thus far; yet what a fall from his former Olympic ambitions, if he had found his true vocation at last!

He noticed now that it had grown colder, and that every board in the house seemed an instrument for the fingers of the wind. Across the sky a thin gossamer of cloud was racing like mad, growing denser each moment with its burden of snow. The trolley cars on the avenue, and the trains that passed on the east, appeared not so much the familiar conveyances of yesterday as fantastic symbols of the atmospheric excitement. Below stairs he heard a hurrying to and fro, a slamming of doors, and a banging of shutters.

At the breakfast table he found his companion depressed, and asked the cause.

"It's in the air," Cresson explained. "I'm reminded of the north wind in California, when it blows across the Mojave Desert. At first you feel exhilarated, and then it begins to get on your nerves, until finally you become desperate."

"Take up your violin again," Berwyn suggested,

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"and worry less about the church. You 're getting thin over it."

"I am," Cresson admitted. "It's so much easier to preach the faith than to live it."

The reference to preaching reminded Berwyn that he had never as yet attended a service in St. Basil's. He had meant to, for the sake of courtesy; but Sunday morning had always been his time for walking, and his churchgoing had been confined for many years to a dip into some Roman Catholic cathedral, where he stood by the door for a few moments to watch the elevation of the Host, or lingered to examine such artistic features of the building as were worth a critic's time. He avoided St. Basil's instinctively, as he avoided all small and melancholy things. For the first time he wondered what kind of preacher his friend was. He imagined that he might be dramatic and effective, when the mood seized him.

In his own mind, Berwyn was convinced that Cresson's worry was not due so much to his financial struggles for the church as to his infatuation with the daughter of Judge Faile. Clearly there was some tie between them, enough to make him respect his friend's rights in the matter, assuming that they existed. As he saw more of her, he began to think the assumption gratuitous, and his own devotion to the judge and to billiards a trifle quixotic.

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He glanced over the headlines of the morning paper as he ate, then flung it aside and looked out of the window at the first snowflakes of the season. An express train passed, gaining full speed in its northward rush. The thick column of smoke, whipped off the rim of the funnel, spread rapidly toward the house, obscured the window-glass for a moment, and was gone.

"They still run the express trains with steam," he remarked, "but now that the smoke nuisance is doomed, I'm inclined to be sentimental over it. I suppose a born conservative like myself never says farewell even to an inconvenience without regret. I positively hate electricity in all its applications."

"Whitman's poem on the locomotive, and Kipling's scientific stories, will be archaic before long," Cresson said. "What a waste of energy!"

Berwyn nodded in acquiescence. "The only literature worth while is that which deals with the eternities, with the permanent in human life. But how this sash rattles! The house is little better than a sieve to let the wind through. I discovered only this morning that the fireplace in my room is a sham; and the steam-pipes do nothing but click and whistle."

"All the houses out here are cardboard," Cresson informed him. "Nobody pretends to keep warm."

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But you shall have the kitchen for your study. We don't use it, and there is the stove—”

“To prepare a hot drink, winter nights,” Berwyn interrupted. “That’s capital. Just the place to write convivial ballads while the kettle is boiling.”

“Either my fancy is playing me strange tricks,” the other said, “or the wind is full of devils.”

With the words, the front door below stairs opened, and a derisive howl resounded through the house. They heard a sound of scuffling, their landlord’s angry expostulations, and guessed by the violent slamming of the door and the subsequent moment of silence that the intruder had been summarily ejected. Then from the street without arose an astonishing multiplicity of weird noises: mournful yells, catcalls, and shrill whistling. With one accord they left the table and hurried to Berwyn’s windows, where they looked down upon a strange spectacle.

Gyrating about on the sidewalk, running up and down the terrace, swarming over the steps, was a troupe of revellers in motley costumes, who seemed to have been blown thither by the wind. Peach stood in his shirt-sleeves on the porch, his arms folded, disapproval and defiance written on his stolid features. They could guess that he was daring the fantastic crowd to repeat their impertinence at their peril.

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"I'll back Peach against the field," Cresson said, greatly diverted.

"This is the oldest festival in the world," the author commented appreciatively. "It finds its origin in prehistoric days, when country louts stained their faces with the lees of wine, and celebrated a good harvest with songs and dancing."

"Always the ancients," Cresson exclaimed, laughing. "It's a continual wonder to me that such a pedant as yourself can write those modern tales."

Berwyn, fumbling in his pocket for a coin, was content to leave the phenomenon unexplained.

"What a solemn ass Peach is," he said. "Instead of getting roiled over the thing, he ought to be amused and pleased. It's charming. We have little enough of the picturesque now-a-days. But it does n't fit in with his insular prejudices."

He selected a dime, then rejected it in favour of a quarter, and his eyes brightened.

"I suppose it's against your principles, Cresson, to look at a pretty woman, but that girl in the gypsy costume, with the black domino and mantilla, can have the half of my kingdom. She's as artistic as if she had just stepped out of a carnival at Naples."

He flung up the sash and leaned out, beckoning with the coin to the girl, who now stood at the edge of the curb, irresolute. Something in her attitude gave him the impression that she had been

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seized with sudden distaste for the sport, perhaps with disdain of her companions.

She saw his intention, and raised her tambourine. As she did so, one of the crowd shouldered her aside and assumed her place, a thickset fellow in the mask of a Jew with an enormous nose, clothed in the long green coat and tattered white hat of the conventional Irish immigrant of the variety stage.

"This is not your graft, my fellow," Berwyn shouted good-naturedly. "Stand aside there."

For answer the man shook his stick threateningly in the direction of the window, and Berwyn divined the ugly mood, the greed and impish mischief, that underlay so much apparent jollity. He suspected that there were thugs in the party, who used the license of the day to practise a practical brigandage, and his temper rose.

"Stand aside, I say," he repeated angrily.

The girl, further back in the street, beckoned again, and Berwyn knew that she was laughing behind her mask. The next moment she had met the coin fairly with her tambourine, had caught it on the rebound, and was holding it up between thumb and finger for his inspection.

His satisfaction at their mutual success was short. Just one gleam of the little hand, and then a deft blow from the thug's stick had sent the coin spin-

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ning to the pavement. An exclamation burst from Cresson's lips, and Berwyn caught one glimpse of his indignant face before he turned and ran rapidly downstairs.

He himself reached the street in time to see a sight that shook him with laughter, though his thought was more of the girl and of her possible injury than of her assailant and his deserts. Evidently, the rector had planted a blow on that artificial nose, for the mask was gone, leaving exposed a countenance which any experienced detective would have associated with the slums of Cherry Street.

Cresson took a large grasp of the loose coat in his left hand, while his right hovered menacingly about the man's head.

"This is the way to the station house," he said grimly. "Only a short two blocks down the hill."

He dragged his prisoner along, shaking him from time to time like a bundle of rags, and the rest of the gang scattered magically, grotesque forms scurrying toward the railroad track and its sheltering embankment. Only the gypsy girl and Berwyn were left behind. She stood still, as if dazed, her tambourine fallen to the ground, holding her injured wrist.

"Are you hurt?" he asked her. She gave no answer, and he unclasped her fingers with gentle

firmness. "Let us see whether that brute has broken your wrist." She winced a little at his touch, but made no sound. "Only a bad bruise," he went on reassuringly. "I'm glad of that."

He freed her hand reluctantly, and their eyes met. Instinctively she drew the black mantilla more closely about her chin, and this concern confirmed his guess. Beneath the dark covering he caught stray threads of gold. His smile of recognition fell wisely short of triumph and presumption.

"If unasked advice were ever heeded by a girl of spirit," he said, "I would suggest that Thanksgiving Day is a dangerous time to indulge in a lark like this. The rector would excommunicate you; but you can trust me to keep the secret."

Josephine's eyes thanked him, for she was frightened. Fellow conspirators now, they glanced down the street. Cresson was already returning, waving the empty coat in high spirits, his anger gone at sight of the ridiculous, denuded figure of his fleeing prisoner. He flung the garment far into the street, as if ridding himself of infection, and came on rapidly. But he was too late.

"Where's the gypsy girl?" he asked breathlessly. "She was here a minute ago. Was she much hurt?"

"Not a bit," Berwyn assured him. "That was all part of the tableau. They cut through our back

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yard toward the railroad tracks. The girl seemed dazed at first, and they got the start of her." He stooped and picked up the tambourine. "I'll keep this as a souvenir of the adventure. I wonder who got the quarter. You can be sure it was n't left lying in the street."

"A farcical ending to my battle for beauty in distress," Cresson remarked, somewhat chagrined.

Berwyn's careless shrug of the shoulders spoke volumes of worldly wisdom.

"Upon my word, you deserved a better damosel, for I admire your courage. I would n't have tackled that tough customer with the shillaleh myself for any Dulcinea that lives."

CHAPTER X

ALL'S FAIR IN LOVE AND WAR

IF Berwyn had felt any scruples in regard to Josephine Faile, the episode on the morning of Thanksgiving Day set his fancy free. He could think of nothing but the girl in the black mask and the gypsy costume. He knew more about her now than Cresson himself, but what he did not know tormented him. He began to piece together the facts he had casually observed: that she spent a great deal of her time in the woods, and that she often took an evening train for the city.

It was his own custom to work by day, and to take his manuscript to the office at night. Sometimes they boarded the same train, but hitherto he had preferred his smoke and his own thoughts to her society. Now all this was changed. He not only ceased to regard her as another's, but this escapade invested her with a new and piquant interest. He made up his mind to seek the opportunity which he had more than once passed by.

On Saturday evening, he took his way across the railroad bridge into the park. Looking back, he saw Cresson still sitting by the window where he

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had left him, and he felt no prick of conscience to mar his satisfaction. His mood was one of exhilaration. The prospect of a little adventure of this kind revived old memories; it set back the course of time some ten years, and restored the glamour of college days. It was as if, having finished his theme in English, he had started out across the Harvard Bridge to see what the night might offer.

The sun had set, and the evening star was reflected dimly from the water below the stone arch where he took his stand. Two days had passed since the first flurry of snow, and not a flake remained. The air was once more mild, almost balmy, by contrast. It was a night for love's adventure, and just the place for the meeting he planned, there in a still, dark valley girdled by the far rim of city lights.

He waited long enough to fear that she had already passed, or that she had taken some other way, or that he was mistaken in supposing she went every evening to the city; long enough also to become conscious of nature's eternal restlessness beneath the appearance of so much peace. From the moving stars above to the water of the little river, everything changed moment by moment. The very wall of woods on the east seemed to glide slowly backward, as he bent over the stone parapet to watch a belated wild duck strike out from the shore and float away in the shadows.

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Berwyn had little taste for nocturnal intimacies with nature; the city was more to his liking; and he was relieved for a double reason when he heard a footstep on the gravel.

"I was waiting for you, Miss Faile," he said frankly, seeing that his guess was right.

She seemed more impressed by this information than startled by his sudden appearance, and asked him why.

"Must I marshal reasons for wishing to meet you?" he demanded, with a charming hint of compliment in his manner.

"One ought to have a reason for everything," she returned, "and I had always heard that men prided themselves on their reasonableness."

"Then, if I must produce one, a temptation to give you a lecture will do at a pinch."

"Is n't that a very common temptation?"

The question was illuminating. This demure girl, who took his appearance so quietly, was more experienced than he had supposed.

"But mine is not really serious," he confessed. "In fact, it yields to a desire to thank you for a very excellent little play, and to express my admiration of your spirit."

They had reached a point in the road opposite Cresson's window, and she glanced up at it before replying. Berwyn saw the turn of her head, though

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he could only guess how far she felt herself accountable to the man who sat there.

"Mr. Cresson did n't recognise me, then?"

She was evidently relieved by his assurances, and went on to discuss the adventure mirthfully, with no attempt to conceal the facts. But what of her motive? he wondered. Not a mere desire for a Thanksgiving Day lark, such as a child might have, he felt sure. There was a young man in the case, perhaps two. He recalled that she had not been particularly surprised to meet him on the bridge. Perhaps she had even anticipated such a meeting, and was no less aware of his habit of going to the city at night than he was of hers.

"Do you know, Miss Faile," he remarked, "that you are a very mysterious personage to me?"

"In what way?"

"In every way. First of all, your setting is interesting. It is like the scene of one of those fascinating old English novels: an ancient country house, with many unused rooms; the daughter of the house coming and going like a ray of sunlight, wandering about by night and day, unconscious of danger. She has temperament and imagination too, a rare combination of the Anglo-Saxon type with a dash of the Italian."

"You take an author's view of a very commonplace situation," she said. "If you keep on ima-

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gining things in this way, I'm afraid you'll begin to look at me as literary material, when you've finished with Angeloro."

It was the first time he had known that she was reading his stories, and he experienced a writer's satisfaction in the discovery. She stopped abruptly in the road.

"This white stone," she told him, "marks the boundary of what was once our own place. Do you wonder I still feel at home here?"

"I don't, indeed. It seems a pity that all these beautiful old suburban estates must go."

"It is a pity," she corroborated, with a touch of bitterness, "especially when all the money that comes from their sale is taken by creditors. That's the only mystery I can see, — the mystery of unfortunate investments, of the disappearance of money. We used to be rich, once; now, we have nothing."

"Money seldom stays in the same family more than two or three generations," he commented. "The founder of a fortune does n't know how to spend it, and his descendants often don't have the chance. Just as they're beginning to learn its uses, it disappears."

He caught himself short when about to illustrate his dictum with the name of an acquaintance. This girl threw him off his guard more easily than Cresson, with his self-absorption and his peculiar work.

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"And what are its uses?" she asked him. "How would you spend a fortune, Mr. Le Strange?"

Berwyn thought awhile before answering. "Well, there's a limit to eating and drinking, to clothes and company and travelling, to art and literature, — to everything, in fact. I really don't know; you must allow me to give up the problem."

The weariness of his tone was that of a man who had given it up, and it attracted her. She was on the revolt from ideality, and hungry for her own chance in the world.

"Such things may have their limits," she commented lightly, "but most of us would be willing to discover them for ourselves."

They were entering the shadow of the museum, and she changed the subject unexpectedly.

"I'm not afraid of the Italians, but I'm afraid of that tomblike thing, full of dead specimens of vegetation. There's a waste of money, at any rate."

He laughed. "I fear you are lacking in the scientific spirit. It's cheerful on the outside, which is something to be thankful for. That yellow brick and stucco work make a fine contrast with the greenness of the grass and trees. However, I quite agree with you; I would n't spend a fortune in that way."

Across an interval of rising ground the glass dome of the conservatory now shone ghostlike, thin as cobweb, its framework delicately traced against

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the lights within. It caught his eye, and suggested a chance to prolong the companionship he found so charming.

"There is something living. I never saw the conservatory lighted up at night before. We might go and investigate the cause."

She pleaded lack of time, and produced her watch from the recesses of her muff. Berwyn struck a match, and they bent over the little disc together, so near that the feather on her velvet hat brushed against his cheek.

"Only six-fifteen," he announced. "Suppose you took the next train; would the heavens fall?"

It was a leading question, and her answer might give him the clue to the mystery of these nocturnal trips of hers, but she merely said, "I might take the next train. I sometimes do."

The air of the conservatory smote them at the door, heavy and damp as a breath from the jungle. The tall fronds, the huge climbing plants, exuded a strange fragrance. It looked like a picture of moonlight in the tropics. Here and there electric bulbs shone milk-white among the leaves, and far down the aisle they saw a moving lantern.

"This seems somewhere east of Suez," he commented. "And there is the presiding genius of the place. Perhaps we had better go and make our peace with him."

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The presiding genius turned out to be an unaggressive botanist, looking for a lost orchid. He knew Josephine well, and Berwyn inferred from their conversation that this place was one of her favourite haunts. The young scientist was so far from resenting their intrusion that he showed a disposition to accompany them, and to explain at length the different kinds of plants which constituted his specialty. Finally he returned to his search.

"I thought we should never get rid of your admirer," Berwyn murmured, with a humorous look after the retreating figure.

"Oh, Mr. Tolland would admire me much more," she answered, pleased, "if I could only palm myself off on him for an orchid."

He had recognised the man, but without much perturbation, as a fellow student whom he had known slightly at college, a hard worker, who graduated with the honour of a Phi Beta Kappa, now a miserable cataloguer of plants in a conservatory. The semi-darkness of the place, his own disguise, and Tolland's absorption in Josephine had left him sufficient serenity of mind to reflect upon the world's reversal of college judgments; how he had once mistaken a dogged persistence and a knack at getting high marks for exceptional ability.

They passed from aisle to aisle, reading incom-

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prehensible labels, touching the leaves of a sensitive plant to see them shrink, talking idly and comparing appreciations.

"But, after all," he said, "it is the total effect of the place that fascinates, rather than any one detail. This creation of glass is as unnatural among buildings as a hummingbird is among birds, all delicacy and artificiality. Now you see it, and now you imagine that you are looking at the sky. Just so a hummingbird is a kind of green mist of wings. I could wander here for hours."

The last sentence was unfortunate in its reminder of the flight of time. They had missed the second train, and he surmised her panic as they hurried toward the elevated station.

Once in the car, she seemed to be reassured, but Berwyn found it difficult to return to the personal basis of their earlier talk. Whether, like the sensitive plant, she too now shrunk from his touch, or whether she was absorbed in the fear of missing an engagement, he could not tell. His experience with women made him accept the reaction philosophically, and he was content to bide his time. He told her that his own errand was merely to take his manuscript to the office; and confessed that the trip was an excuse for diversion, as he might have mailed it the day before.

"Let me read the story now," she begged. "I

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shall feel like a privileged person. You are the only author I know."

He surrendered the manuscript, and sat thinking of her while she read, pleasantly conscious of her sweetness and of their unexpressed freemasonry. It was the comradeship of art, he reflected. She bore the stamp of art unmistakably, in her manner and dress, in a hint of eagerness and capability, ready at a moment's notice to step forward and make an impression.

Berwyn knew the type, and the episode of Thanksgiving Day suggested the stage to his mind. The conjecture gave him no little satisfaction. It increased her attraction, and it explained much, practically everything, that had puzzled him, both in her movements and in her relationship with Cresson. If an issue had arisen between them, it might be this, that she was unwilling to exchange the theatre for a country rectory. And who could blame her?

She returned the story, and its theme was the burden of their conversation almost to the end of their journey.

"You will think I am turning the tables," she said, "but you seem no less a mysterious personage to me than you say I seem to you."

"Mine is a plain tale," he answered, with a subtle smile, which strengthened her impression, as indeed

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he was willing it should. "Some day I'll tell it to you, but just at present I don't wish to lose the atmosphere with which your fancy has invested me. It makes me feel quite like the great incognito in a play."

She left him at Forty-second Street, and he saw no way, in view of his own announced errand down town, of going with her. But when he had handed in his manuscript and returned to the street, he bought an evening paper and scanned the list of theatrical attractions, looking for the one in which she might possibly appear. He did not discover her name, nor had he anticipated such easy success. The unravelling of a mystery, and especially of one connected with a woman, was more alluring than the mystery itself.

CHAPTER XI

FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD

FOR upward of an hour Cresson sat where Berwyn had left him. Thrown back upon himself of late, he had begun to realise how scantily furnished was the mansion of his soul: only one picture left in every room in which he wandered, and that the picture of a woman. As the fabric of his church on the hill took shape, his house of faith was beginning to disintegrate. He had built it upon the sand of personal ambition; his unhappy love affair was the descending wind and rain it could not resist.

Now that his trouble had become grim and permanent, he refused to take his violin in hand; and he lacked the humility to pray. A blackness of despair seized upon him, for his want of faith. At the first real test, he had failed. He scorned the means of relief he had so often, urged upon others, — urged so movingly that he was conscious of their fixed and self-accusing faces. Perhaps his was the sin against the Holy Ghost which would not be forgiven.

The room became stifling. He threw up the window, and leaned out, noting the darkness of the

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night, and a thin line of fire in the dry grasses of the park creeping slowly southward. Then he turned back to his desk. One thing remained,— his ambition, no longer a consecrated purpose to serve others, but a defiant resolve to excel and emerge above the mass. He would build that church, no matter what the effort or discouragement, just to prove to the world, and to her, that he could do it.

He wrote a letter, placing an order for the windows ; another, asking for an estimate on the furnace ; a begging note to the rector of a rich church in the city ; another of thanks for a contribution. Then he took out his account-book, and began to figure on the probable debt to be shouldered at the completion of the edifice.

Cresson did all this, acutely aware of the fact that it was Saturday night, and that the morrow would find him unprepared. If he talked to his people on the subjects that absorbed him most, he would discuss the various kinds of pointing for stone work, the cost of lumber per foot, the difficulty of raising money, the venality of building inspectors, the tyranny of labour unions, and the evasiveness of architects.

But the tension relaxed at last, and gave way to a mood of homesickness for better things. He opened his Bible at random, seeking a text of guidance, as a mediæval Churchman might have

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consulted the *sortes sacrae* or the *sortes Virgilianae*. The words his eyes fell upon were so strangely appropriate to his need as to touch a vein of mysticism in his nature, and to send him from the house in literal obedience of the suggestion : *I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me.*

When he reached the street, he noticed that the fire in the park had spread before the breeze and was now burning in a wide arc, like a slowly advancing line of battle. He took the long circuit to his destination, keeping the panorama in view, glad of mere coolness and space, thinking casually of this and that : of the probable cause of the fire ; of the night he had taken this walk with Le Strange and had introduced him to Josephine, that night from which he dated the inexplicable change in their relationship ; of the prophet Habakkuk, whose voice had reached him with such vibrance and reality across the centuries. But all thoughts were fitful as the wind, another's rather than his own. Something of the composure of the Universal Mind descended upon him, so that he saw himself and his experiences from a detached view-point, or, as it were, from the perspective of a star.

The suburb had now taken on the quietness of a village ; the street was deserted, the curtains of the

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scattered houses were drawn. But — odd incongruity — the cars that swept through this solitude were still crowded, bound for outlying towns far across the intervening belt of darkness.

Cresson turned into Gun Hill Road, passed his “upper chamber,” so soon to be abandoned, and ascended the long hill. The fire below the ridge threw the half-finished church into bold relief; the dark stone walls, pierced by Gothic windows, the steep rafters, still uncovered, showing like bars against the sky.

The night watchman emerged from the tool-shed at his approach, but returned to his pipe when he recognised the intruder, for Cresson was accustomed to visit the place at almost any hour of the day or night.

He groped his way into the interior of the building, and stood looking up through the rafters at the stars beyond. Were it not for the pleasant odour of pine and cypress that filled the place, he might have imagined himself standing in an old church, unroofed by a mighty wind. The windows gaped mournfully; the scattered planks on the trusses above gave the impression of having been thrown down helter-skelter; the breeze at this height was stronger than below, and rose at times to a distinct and solemn note.

Cresson found a ladder, and climbed to the top

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of the wall that overlooked the park. The fire was now entirely within view, driven by the freaks of the wind, and by obstructing walks and roads, into fantastic shapes; no longer an advancing arc of battle, but blazing serpents, crawling as they could. The difference made by this last comparatively short ascent was extraordinary. The horizon seemed miles removed, the heavens deeper, the world more like a map unrolled.

The creator within Cresson was satisfied, and he experienced a brief exaltation. The thickness of the walls, the careful, honest laying of stone upon stone, pleased him. He ran his fingers over the smooth jointing of the nearest rafters, and saw that they were put together to stay. He glanced downward into the long nave, dimly disclosed at intervals by the windows, and pictured it finished as he had planned. His constructive dream was beginning to come true. His church was already a conspicuous object against the sky from the valley below. It had acquired a personality and a meaning.

He turned once more to the outer and upper view: the weird fire, the long trail of the gaslit street across the park, the stars, the little moon. The time had come to meditate upon his text. Slowly he crept along the wall to the half-completed tower, and sat there, thinking of Habakkuk on the walls of Sion, looking down at the circling campfires

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of the Chaldeans. The word for which he listened came, but it was not the word he wished to hear ; the message was not for his people, but for himself.

If there was one thing above all others upon which Cresson prided himself, it was his sanity of judgment, the fact that his religion was an intellectual conviction, independent of the ebb and flood of emotional tides. He had supposed that there was nothing of the fanatic in his nature ; then why was he moved to do an irrational thing ?

His mother was a Jewess, and this fact, which was surely the concern of no one but himself, had appeared to him from time to time as something he ought to tell ; never more inexorably than at this moment, when its disclosure would complete his ruin with the woman he loved, and mar the career that had turned the corner to success.

Was this impulse to confess a mere psychological singularity, the imp of the perverse whispering in his ear, or was it God's own unmistakable command ? He recalled that he had often been unhappy, often tormented by doubts, even while the course of his love ran smoothly. Why was this, if it were not a secret consciousness of something wrong on his own part, which vitiated both his relationship with Josephine and his work in the ministry ? A terror shook him with the conviction that he would one day confess, like a man who had

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long carried a crime on his conscience, and could bear the burden no longer.

For the hundredth time he began to reason it out. His father, an Englishman, had married a brilliant Jewish singer, had taken her from the stage, and with her money had bought an extensive estate in California. She died when her son was very young, and he could not remember her. He merely knew the fact of her race; and in the way that children divine attitudes of mind in their elders, he early discovered that this was something his father did not care to discuss.

Still, it was never a secret, in the strict sense of the word, until he went to Columbia. Only when he saw there the student discrimination against his mother's race did his habit of silence on the point become a deliberate deception. The secret was easy to keep, for his name and appearance were Gentile. He imagined that to confess himself even half a Jew was to jeopardise his chance of admission into a fraternity, of selection for the athletic teams, of equal participation in the social activities of his classmates. So he kept his own counsel, and realised an undergraduate's ambition.

Here, for the first time, he became intensely conscious of this thing which, in the free, incurious life of California, was as nothing. He saw his mother's race feared for its ability and slighted for

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its faults; and once he had cast his vote against a Jew who might otherwise, for his exceptional qualifications, have been admitted to his fraternity. This was more than snobbishness; it was treachery, and the act left its scar. He could never speak to the man again.

The subject of the Jewish race began to exercise an irresistible fascination for Cresson. He could not ignore it; he could never take a Jew simply and easily. Early in his college course he began the study of Hebrew, until, by his senior year, he had obtained a knowledge of the language that was the pride of his rabbi teacher and the amusement of his classmates. In the slang phrase of his day, he was called a "Hebrew shark." It seemed a strange fad to his friends, who exercised their ingenuity in selecting what they called "snap courses," especially as he announced no purpose of entering the ministry.

Nor did he entertain any such purpose. It was so far mere curiosity that led him on. He was discovering his mother through these studies. The song of Deborah was his favourite poem in the Hebrew scriptures. Deborah was his mother's name; and she too was a great singer. He took many trips to the Ghetto, and attended the services of the synagogues, always alone. Moreover, he never forgot that his musical gifts were a maternal inherit-

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ance. Of his music he was both ashamed and proud. He feared it as he might fear a pointing finger, and was careful to seem indifferent to his accomplishment. It was no part of his plan to play too well, to move men almost to tears, and then to be subtly despised as an entertaining fellow and a fiddler. His music was like his Jewish blood, something he both loved and hated.

Deep in Cresson's nature there was a strain of the ancient Hebrew intensity concerning divine things, fermenting beneath the cool, conventional surface of the Englishman. His father had him baptised and confirmed in the Church, because that was one of the things which had been done in the family since the Reformation. But there the matter dropped. Anything like an emotional disturbance concerning such ceremonies would have seemed somewhat vulgar to the elder Cresson, a touch of the Wesleyan.

When his father died, Cresson learned for the first time of the mortgages that left him poor. Little remained after the settlement but the furniture, and a small balance in cash. Now, as he sat there on his watch-tower, he recalled the spiritual crisis that had led him to the seminary. Then, too, he had wrestled with the problem of the lie his life implied, and the battle was decided as before. He was able to persuade himself that, like St. Paul, he could be a deceiver and yet true.

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But the secret would never allow him to be wholly happy. He had moods in which he thought he ought to tell Josephine, to put her love to the test; and he accused himself of morbidness. There were seasons when he told himself that his peculiar position between the two races was a divine purpose, pointing his mission to his mother's people. He knew their language and their psychology. It was his duty to convince them that the Messiah for whom they waited had already come; and he called this mood fanatic.

Cresson had waited long on the watch-tower for the answer to his question, and now, when wearied with the old argument, somewhere from the emptiness about him it came. A psychologist would have said that he experienced a hallucination similar to that of Moses beside the burning bush, of Samuel in the temple, of Elijah at the entrance of his cave, and of all the prophets who heard the voice of Jehovah. A man of faith would have retorted that this was the explanation of "science falsely so called," and that God can make men's senses the channels of his message, when He so wills. But it seemed to Cresson that he actually heard a voice which said, "For this purpose I raised thee up."

He sat stilled with awe. For what purpose? There was only one. The outcome of his love was an unimportant matter in the plan which had shaped

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his life from the very time his father married a brilliant Jewish singer to serve his own vanity and advantage. The son of that marriage had been destined from his birth to the life of a missionary among the ancient chosen people of God.

Cresson had never felt the conviction so clearly, nor resisted it so bitterly, as now. A vision of Josephine rose before him, a Gentile of the Gentiles, and a patrician among them, though of fallen fortunes. He was sure that she would have classed him irrevocably with the Jews at their first acquaintance, had she known his history, and thus have closed the door to love. He would never have been able to overcome that inherited prejudice of the Middle Ages against the slayers of the Christ. And now when, for some mysterious reason, she seemed to be drifting away from him, was he to make her loss assured by following the impulse of a fanatic?

It was of Josephine Faile alone that he thought as he began to descend the hill; the causes of their estrangement, and how he might win her back. Yet his pace was rapid as that of a fugitive. Like Habakkuk, he had waited for the divine message, in the silence of the night; and now, like another prophet who went down to Joppa and took ship for distant Tarshish, he was fleeing blindly from the presence of the Lord.

CHAPTER XII

CRESSON MISSES A SERVICE

CRESSON advanced near enough to the fire to be able to distinguish the hands of his watch. It was midnight. He reflected that in future years the hour would ring out solemnly over the parkland from the tower of his church. The twelve brazen beats might send robbers to their work, and lovers to their homes; and they might, perhaps, remind some reveller returning late from the city of the flight of time, of things past and things to come, of which the Church was a witness.

He recalled idly his earlier speculations in regard to the cause of the fire: whether it were started by the sparks of a passing train, or by boys in sheer mischief, or by the park authorities themselves. Not a figure could be seen on the broad expanse; and there was no need of watchers. The conflagration was creeping toward the river, where it must finally burn itself out on the bank, without jeopardy to the woods of the Faile estate beyond.

As he advanced further, the ground became so warm that he made a long *détour* to the right, where the fire had been arrested by a gravel walk.

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He was now on the windward side. The flames, purring softly in the light breeze, were nowhere more than a foot or two in height, and he extended his hands toward them with a sense of warmth that was doubly pleasant after his chill inaction. There was mental comfort, too, in this return to earth from his aerial meditations.

On this side the freaks of the fire were more apparent. Licking its way along the ground wherever it found food for its consumption, it sent out more than one long stream into the deeper grass. In other places it was arrested by heaps of stones and winding footways.

Cresson followed one of these streams to see where it would end. At each step it grew narrower. Viewed from above, this particular area of fire would be seen to have the shape of a huge curved horn, which came to a point where the path and the roadway joined.

It had been a night of strange experiences, and so it came about that he was scarcely surprised to see above the wavering heat and flames the eyes of Josephine Faile fixed upon his own. This was the fulfilment of the vision that had led him to this place.

“Josephine!” he called.

She started to her feet, and he perceived that she had not seen him till he spoke.

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"Did I frighten you?" he asked her.

Without waiting for an answer, he came around by the walk and seated himself beside her on the heap of stones. Pride forbade him to use the barren privilege he had bargained for; but though he did not kiss her, he must take her hand in his.

"What have you been doing?" he questioned anxiously. "Have you been out here all this time alone, too? I have been up on the hill; I could n't think of sleep, nor of anything but you. And now I've found you. How cold your hand is!" He was warming it gently in his own. "Give me the other one," he commanded, with a delicious sense of the old possession.

Her silence, her indifference and strangeness, struck him with a chill. He glanced at her again, and saw by her dress that she had not merely wandered out from the house to see the fire, as he had at first supposed.

"Where have you been?" he demanded.

"You have no right to ask," she reminded him, in a constrained voice.

"Yes, I remember our agreement, but it's preposterous. I can't bear to go on in this way; it drives me mad. Why do you make such strange conditions? The last two months have been a nightmare to me. We're unnatural with each other. And this very moment, why is it I can't kiss you

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as I used to? There's something between us. Do you realise how you have changed?"

"Have I changed?" she asked him, coldly curious. "But do you know, Cyril, what it all comes from?"

"No," he answered eagerly. "If I knew, I could end it."

"Your distrust of me."

"But do you wonder that I can't understand the meaning of all this mystery?"

"You don't trust me, then?"

She turned toward him, and he sat entranced. The firelight made her face luminous beneath the black rim of her hat and its drooping plume. The picture was one of warmth and golden beauty; but the eyes were impenetrable. There the firelight showed only vague thoughts, like shadows, coming and going, estimates, fears, reserves, anything but surrender. Impalpable bar, but strong as iron! He must break it down, and pass within.

"But do you trust me, Josephine? Have I ever kept anything from you?"

To what extent he had hardened his heart against his vision was apparent in the assurance with which he asked this question; and not even the clairvoyance of her answer could disturb him now.

"I don't know whether you have or not. Perhaps you have. I never asked you. I gave you the

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same liberty I demanded." To his surprise, her eyes were full of tears. "I suppose my poor little birds are all dead by this time."

His compunction racked him with a great distress; he put his arm about her and drew her to him.

"That was my fault, partly. Birds are not human beings. I never ought to have used the analogy; never would have done so, had I foreseen the result. I drove you to it, and you could n't quite forgive me."

"It was n't the birds," she said, "though that helped."

Gradually her warmth pervaded him; her tears were a wonderful solvent; and the kiss he gave her went to his head like wine.

"What is it, then, my darling? Tell me. Let us end this wretched situation, and understand each other at last."

She withdrew herself from his embrace and sat upright, burying her hands in her muff. Only thus could she hold her own against him. What her own state of mind was, she could scarcely have told; but she was distinctly conscious of another man who had appealed to her imagination, who understood her and asked no questions. Her answer was truthful, up to a certain point.

"You remember when we quarrelled, that day I set off the blast? I ought to have been frank with

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you then. I was frank, but I ought to have stuck to it. It was a pity we patched it up the way we did. We should have known that we were unsuited to each other, except as friends. It is n't too late, even now, to be as we were at first. We shall be so much happier when we admit our mistake. I'm not the kind of woman you want for your wife,—that's what I wanted to tell you, but I lacked the courage. I should ruin your career. I love money, and pretty clothes, and a good time,—all the things you care nothing about. I might as well tell you now, so that you can be free to find some one else more worthy to be your wife and an inspiration in your work."

"What a preposterous idea you have of me!" he exclaimed. "I love a good time, too, and pretty clothes, when you wear them."

The declaration would have been true once, in those days when not all his explorations in the great city were sociological and religious. But the scholastic habit had grown, and his intense nature was now set so strongly in one direction that those early follies were but a dim memory, a palimpsest upon which another record had been inscribed.

"That's not like you, Cyril," she answered, startled, "and it's insincere. You say that because you think it will disarm me, because you are determined to marry me at all hazards, even if you

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have to use deception to do it. Afterwards, I would sink to an unimportant place in your scheme of things. In reality, you condemn and scorn my views of life, and pass moral judgments upon them. But I have my moral judgments, too; and this time I know I'm right."

Cresson also knew that she was right, and he raged against the accusation. He who had entertained doubts about her was himself unmasked by her unerring instinct. His fabric of deception was demolished. His pride was hurt, and to hurt him thus was to inflict the wound that unmanned him. His passionate nature was stirred to the depths, and he talked wildly, denying the things he loved for mad love of her.

"Listen, Josephine; if the choice lies between you and the Church, I'll give up the Church. Do you suppose I can't make a living in the world, and provide you with the things you want? Why, of course I can. Rather than—"

"Stop!" she cried, frightened. She rose hurriedly to her feet, her conscience like an accusing voice in her ears: "What have you done now?"

He followed, and they took the road together in the direction of her home. When they reached the bridge that led into her own grounds, she would not listen longer.

"Do you know what you are doing?" she asked.

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"You will say I am denying my Lord," he answered bitterly.

He seized her by the wrist with a primitive instinct, resurgent through the acquired habits of a thousand years. His jealousy, hitherto unacknowledged as such, suddenly focussed upon the only possible rival, and it was the more terrible because of the consciousness of his race. If she scorned him now, what would she do if she knew the secret he had guarded so carefully?

"I have been a fool," he went on. "This mystery dates from the very hour I brought Le Strange to your house. You changed toward me from that time. Where have you been to-night? Where is he?"

He looked at her searchingly, her face paling to the very lips, dimly seen beneath the shadowing plume, her fixed eyes desperately defiant. Afterward she remembered that the sweetly discordant cry of wild ducks flying south had reached them in that silence, and that the sound had even then attracted her notice. It was years since she had heard it; she had supposed the wild ducks gone, never to return. Afterward, too, she regretted her answer. She asked herself why she had not been able to meet the implied accusation with the dignified silence it deserved, instead of honouring it by a denial.

Ashamed to call her word in question, but uncon-

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vinced, he stood rooted to the spot, and watched her disappear among the trees, desire urging him to follow, pride restraining him.

At last he returned to the place where they had sat together. The fire had burned itself out against the roadway and the river. Only a few final tongues of flame struggled intermittently against the deepening night. With his chin propped on the palm of one hand, and the other hanging listlessly at his side, he stared at the blackened earth, fringed at his feet by a line of fading sparks. One particular point of light, upon which he had fixed his eyes, flared up an instant, and was gone.

Unable to endure the silence and darkness, he made a movement to rise, and his fingers came in contact with something that had lain concealed in the shadow of the stones. He stooped down, and lifted a light straw dress-suit case, such as a woman might carry. It was Josephine's. What did it contain? he wondered. One of those flimsy garments which women spend so much time and thought in fashioning? Cresson had missed the refining influence of a mother and sister, and the possibility of innocent vanity and romance in pretty clothes was a page of life his eyes had never read. Why had she said she loved such things, and money, and a good time, arousing within him sinister suspicions which he had never before entertained?

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But she had denied them, and he weighed her denial. Perhaps she was returning from a short visit in the city. He admitted that he knew nothing of her friends, her relatives, other claims than his own. Moved by a hope of reconciliation, he took the bag and began to retrace his steps. He longed for nothing now but to see her face again.

The longing was denied. She might have forgotten the suit case, or feared to return for it. The great house was dark and silent; only the trees that hemmed it about were living, whispering among themselves high up in their leafless branches. He mounted the steps noiselessly, and left his burden beside the door, oppressed with a deeper sadness than he had ever known, for it seemed the place where one he loved lay dead.

When he emerged once more from the woods, he walked into a darkness scarcely less dense than that he had just left. He looked up to find that the moon and stars were blotted out, and to feel the rain on his face. The change which seemed so sudden, but which had in reality been gradual, was accepted by him with an antique simplicity of despair. The black earth, devastated by fire and beaten by the winter rain, was his fellow criminal under the same scourge of an offended God. There was no light in the sky; all the birds of the heavens had fled; he walked alone through a formless void,

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beyond which the steaming corona of city lights trembled and moved like an unsubstantial illusion.

The storm was beating a steady crescendo on the skylight as he ascended the stairs that led to his apartments. There he groped for his violin, and sat down to play. Perhaps, before morning, he might find the relief of tears; but otherwise he could not go to church. He felt that it would be a sacrilege to attempt to administer the Holy Communion with an unrepentant heart.

CHAPTER XIII

CONFESSIONS

WEARIED by his vigil at the window, Cresson slipped off his shoes and went to bed. He sat there some time longer, propped by pillows, his violin still in his hand, though he had laid aside the bow. His playing had drugged him merely; it had not touched his heart. Now he struck the G string from time to time with his thumb, and listened to the vibrations till they died away in the steady beating of the rain without.

Here was a new musical sensation to one experienced in music, — the magic of a single note repeated again and again. The soul of the instrument had become a monotone, crying the same message over and over from out its sounding prison-house. But the message was inarticulate. It had the mystery of the murmur of a shell held close to the ear, when one hears the dirge of all those who have gone down to the sea in ships, never to return. It was without hope, but it was also too vast and cosmic for a personal grief.

The sound suggested to Cresson, not thoughts, but emotions, symbols, and visions. The last picture

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was one that was seldom absent from his mind these days: he saw his completed church on the hilltop, and heard the bell tolling, the note one of invitation and warning, now swelling out with a sudden, deep vibration, then dying weirdly away in ghostly echoes against the western rim of the valley. A high wind carried troops of clouds across the sky, black and level at the base, piled high above in white, fantastic masses. The procession was steady, irresistible, and bewildering. The world below seemed waiting for some solemn crisis. A hush of expectancy fell upon the listener. Something momentous, surpassing every experience, was about to happen; but he was too weary to watch longer.

Cresson slipped down among the blankets with a comforting sense of shelter. He shut out the grey light of dawn that was beginning to spread between the rattling blinds, and he shut out the noise of many waters. He shut out also conscience, doubt, responsibility, and fear. Far away they echoed and beat against the barriers of this safe haven of sleep that was closing him about, until their voices died away in silence, like a retreating storm.

It was still raining when he awoke to find Le Strange standing over him, talking. He rubbed his eyes, as if to test the reality of the apparition, and he tried to comprehend the jumble of syllables. At last this characteristic sentence reached him: —

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"What's the matter, old man? You act dopy."

"I was just dreaming," Cresson answered. He sat up, fully awake. "I've had a dreadful night, and a wonderful night, too. What time is it?"

Berwyn sat down on the edge of the bed, and glanced at his watch. "Eleven o'clock. Mrs. Peach is very much exercised about you. When you did n't respond to her whistle through the tube, this morning, she came up to see what the matter was. She says she shook you awake, and that you told her to let you alone, that there was n't any service to-day. She was waiting for me with the story when I came in. I'm afraid your reputation with her has suffered, and that she thinks you've been drinking. If I did n't know you better, I'd think so myself."

"I have no remembrance of the incident," Cresson commented, wondering. "If I answered her in that way, I was talking in my sleep. Well, there won't be any service to-day. Fortunately, it's bad weather, and few will come."

He seemed unconcerned at this neglect of his professional duties, and Berwyn supposed it made little difference in such a remote mission, provided he steadily advanced his general plan and built his church. In reality, Cresson took his duties hard, and had never missed a service before, but his present apparent indifference was due to a new

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perspective. He still saw the restored world through the atmosphere of his dream. In it the man sitting on his bedside was no longer a possible rival, an object of suspicion and perhaps of hatred. He was merely a fellow human being, bound by the same infirmities, compassed by the same wonder of life and death, one whom he was meeting casually on the swift journey from time into eternity. He would not quarrel with him by the way.

"Your breakfast is ready for you on the table," Berwyn told him. "If you don't hurry, the coffee will be cold. I had Mrs. Peach make it fresh. I want some myself."

Cresson laughed at the incongruity which he alone saw between his dream and the steaming cup of coffee, whose fragrance now penetrated to his room. This was one of those characteristic little acts of Berwyn by which he endeared himself to his friends. In his college days, it was always Berwyn who went to his suffering comrades the morning after a celebration, bringing cracked ice for aching heads, and genial philosophy to troubled consciences. But then, as now, the man so kind and charming in small things could be disloyal in life's vital relationships.

To-day he stood in need of comfort himself, and Cresson saw this as soon as they took their seats at the table by the windows. Evidently he had

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refreshed himself and changed his linen, for he appeared as fastidiously dressed as usual, every straight black hair smoothed carefully into place ; but the lines in his face had deepened, and his eyes were like a lamp extinguished.

A brusque and sympathetic frankness came back naturally to Cresson's lips, the freemasonry and understanding of roommates in undergraduate days. "You're a rocky-looking specimen this morning yourself, Le Strange. I can see that you've made a night of it. It does n't pay, does it?"

"It used to pay better than it does now," Berwyn answered. Faded as he was, and marred, it was wonderful how his smile redeemed the ruin from utter dreariness. It was a smile of profound sadness and disillusion, but with a certain sweetness of comradeship to give it light.

"You're a Pagan," Cresson continued, musing. "When I see you, I see the spirit of the Greek anthology personified. There's no hope, and kindness because there's no hope, and refined pleasure, and a worship of the beautiful, and all that. You remind me of those Alexandrine poets I once read in college, and of Ovid, and Petronius Arbiter."

"That's a pretty sweeping indictment," Berwyn answered, "but I'm inclined to think you've returned a true bill. Only — and it's an important

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difference — I lack the literary ability of the gentlemen you've mentioned."

"It was your literary ability that suggested the comparison," Cresson returned, — "those adventures of Angeloro. And yet I've been tempted to take issue with your point of view for some time. To you it's all a spectacle. You get the story, you see the picturesque side of it, but you stand aloof, nevertheless, from the essential, struggling souls of those men and women. It is as if they were created for your curious inspection and entertainment."

"Perhaps they were," Berwyn said; "who knows?"

His critic laughed. "I see you scent the theological issue, and decline to meet it. From your point of view, you're right, and you mustn't think I'm so professional as not to see what you are trying to do. You're succeeding, too. Everybody who reads your stories is interested. Within two months you've made a name for yourself. People are beginning to ask who this Philip Le Strange is, and I'm beginning to be proud of knowing a literary celebrity. But you don't want to endanger your career in this way, at the very start."

"It was the last adventure of Angeloro that did the business," Berwyn confessed. "I thought it was good enough to merit a celebration. When I

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read it over this morning in cold print, I saw it for what it was, merely clever and evanescent, not worth getting drunk over."

"I don't believe anything is worth getting drunk over," Cresson commented. "The body asks too high a price for its pleasures."

There was nothing condemnatory in that warm, magnetic look of his, which attracted so many by its physical vitality and spiritual wealth. He was not a denunciatory preacher, and always more man than priest.

"But you're not as badly off as I am to-day," he resumed. "Yours are the sins of the prodigal son, but mine is sin of a deeper kind."

"What do you mean?" the other demanded, interested and expectant. He anticipated some confession of spiritual struggle such as he had glimpsed on their first walk together, and on more than one occasion since.

"First, let me tell you the dream I had just before you waked me," Cresson began. "I thought the Judgment Day had come, the new heaven and the new earth described in the Book of Revelation. The city of the new Jerusalem seemed to lie over there where that wall of woods is, to the east, and all the roads that led up to it were thronged with the redeemed, who were entering into the gates. It was just like the vision of St. John: the great wall

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of jasper and sapphire and emerald, the twelve open gates, and the streets of pure gold. I know how you may feel about that book. From your point of view, it may seem merely an elaborate work of art, and there have been times when I myself compared it with Ezekiel, as a literary study. But in my dream it was as fresh and new as if I had never heard of anything like it. The marching host was a real host, and the anthems transcended anything I had ever heard or imagined. I longed to join the innumerable army, and to enter in through the gates into the city; but I found myself unable to move. My conscience told me that I was to be shut out, because I was one of those who had lived a lie. You remember the phrase, perhaps, — ‘whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.’ The vision was fading away into the distance, leaving me in a horror of great darkness, when you came in and shook me awake.”

He paused, and looked out over the park toward the dim, rain-veiled wall of woods, as if he would conjure up once more the sight of the celestial city. Berwyn was thinking that it was the sound of the storm, penetrating the dreamer’s thinning sleep, which had suggested the heavenly music; that the glory was none other than the broadening light between the shutters, seen through half-opening eyes. The psychology was that of a waking dream,

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explicable in every detail ; but he had no desire to touch the illusion with the finger of science. That his explanation of physical causes might be true, and the dream still be a message of the Holy Spirit, was a conception he would have scouted as a theological subtlety.

"I'll tell you what the lie is," Cresson resumed. "It will be a relief to me."

As he told of the long struggle which had culminated so strangely, Berwyn's disappointment would have been disconcerting, had he allowed a hint of it to appear through the attentive mask of his inscrutable face. He had anticipated the revelation of a crime, or of a sin, at the least. The story he heard was interesting, indeed, but the moral battle seemed a mere beating of the air.

"You don't mean to say," he interposed at last, "that your conscience troubles you about that man you voted against when he was nominated for your fraternity?"

"But it does," said Cresson, "and I mean to look him up and ask his forgiveness."

"You'll just deliver yourself over to his contempt. He's a Jew, and will take advantage of your confession. He'll be sure you want his good will for some reason."

He saw that his companion winced at his instinctive judgment of this unknown man, based entirely

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upon race prejudice, and hastened to set himself right.

"But you're not a Jew, Cresson. You have only a strain of Jewish blood. You know what Lowell used to say, that every man of talent owes his ability to a strain of Jewish blood somewhere in his make-up, no matter how far back. It's really something to be proud of."

"Yes, if I only had been proud of it; but you see I concealed the fact. I sailed under false colours; I pretended to be what I was n't."

"I don't agree with you," Berwyn argued. "You were n't obliged to tell your family history to every man you met."

"You don't see the moral issue involved, then?"

"No; you merely imagined it, till it became real. The truth is, you've become morbid on this subject. Take my advice, and forget it entirely. If it would hurt your career in the Church, — and you're the best judge of that, — don't say anything about it. Don't cripple yourself and weaken your influence, if you want to do a good work. I've thought all along that you only half knew how to play the game. Don't enlighten people. Use them, for their good, of course. You belong to the greatest police force in the world; and, by the way, why don't you wear its uniform?"

"Because I admire the evangelical school in the

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Church. They lay the stress upon character ; they exact more in the way of conduct from themselves and their people ; and they're right in the main. I don't want to play a game, as you put it, nor use any means that may suggest such an idea. If I did, it would be easy enough. But, strange as it may seem to you, I really believe ; and it seems to me that my peculiar position between the two races involves a duty to both that I have shirked."

Berwyn gave a foreign little shrug of despair. " I'll give you up as a hopeless enthusiast, if you allow your mind to set in that direction. But I see the yeast is working, and fear the worst. Take my advice, and stop before you begin. What's the use of being a splendid failure, when you're in a fair way of becoming a splendid success ? Better to take the world as you find it, instead of trying to make it over new. It's a pretty good world, after all, if you take a spectator's view of it."

He got up and lighted a cigarette.

" Why, I'm in a morbid mood myself to-day, but I manage to retain the saving grace to know it. By the time this cigarette is smoked out, I'll be ready to drop into bed. That's the first thing to do. When I wake up, I'll be in better shape to follow your advice ; and I hope you'll think of mine."

The conversation was humanising in its influ-

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ence, but it left the gulf that separated them still unspanned. It was not only that Cresson could not tell to such a sceptic his vision on the tower and its compelling force. He acquitted Berwyn of the treachery he had imagined the night before ; but it was a significant fact that the name of Josephine Faile was not mentioned between them.

CHAPTER XIV

THE JUDGE AS FATHER

JUDGE FAILE had always regarded Cresson as a good fellow, and congenial in some things, but the young man had stamped himself, by his absorption in his work, as one who cared nothing for the merely social side of life. The judge had never asked him to share in his own particular kind of a good time, until the advent of Berwyn; but now he invited them both to dinner at the Union League, the only club in which he still retained an interest and a membership. The three set off for the city with such evident parity of anticipation that Mr. Faile was inclined to revise his estimate of the dominie. Ignorant of the crisis through which the young man had passed, he could not know of his reactionary longing for diversion.

Berwyn managed to put himself with his back to the dining-room, and the vista of Fifth Avenue before his eyes. He was acutely aware of his temerity in coming to this place, but not altogether unwilling to tempt fate. This was one of his uncle's haunts, and the chances were at least even that the architect would dine there that very evening.

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Now that he was safely seated, Berwyn enjoyed the sense of risk. It had been too easy to maintain his incognito. Little by little he had ventured into the old familiar streets, and more than once he had passed his former friends unrecognised. He sometimes wondered whether, if he were still smooth-shaven, as before his disappearance, he might not enjoy the same immunity. An old acquaintance might think that the man he had just passed resembled George Berwyn, but would the possibility of identity ever enter his mind? Berwyn was sometimes tempted to put it to the test. In fact, he had decided that he would; but the time was not yet ripe.

Twice the judge interrupted his reminiscences of the days of the Rebellion and the founding of the club to nod to some friend, and the author lost the thread of the talk in fruitless speculation concerning the faces behind his back. What if his uncle's were among them at that moment? What if he must pass those shaggy brows and keen, restless eyes on the way out?

Cresson was a better listener, for he was really interested in his host's conversation. He would have given much to possess the traditions the judge took so easily, and the associations he so seldom renewed. Sometimes he seemed to himself a man of no country: not of England, nor of Palestine, nor of the America in which he was born. He would have been

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glad of one loyalty, with all its prejudice and peace of mind.

Berwyn, in spite of his own preoccupation, divined Cresson's satisfaction in his present situation, and his desire to be seen there. Not that there was anything in his companion's manner that would have suggested the thought a week ago, but knowledge had given him a fatal perspicacity. Had he expressed his true opinion, he would have said that Cresson's consciousness of his hybrid blood was due, not to morbidity, but to racial snobbishness.

Cresson was not unaware of this subtle change, and his only consolation now in regard to his confession was a conviction that it would be accepted as a confidence. Yet his resentment was deep. As the dinner progressed, he gave his attention to his host with more deliberate intention. Over their coffee and cigars he proposed that they go to the University Club for a game of billiards.

"I vote for the theatre, myself," Berwyn interposed.

The alternative was unpremeditated. It was anything to avoid going to a club of which he was a member. He thought he saw also a desire on Cresson's part to advertise his own membership there, and was unwilling to gratify it. Fortunately, the judge was of his opinion.

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"I propose to give my legs a rest for to-night and take in the play."

He sent the waiter for a copy of the evening paper, and began to scan the theatrical page, with caustic comments upon the deterioration of the stage, rejecting Berwyn's recommendation of *Julius Cæsar* with genial scorn. "Nobody can play Shakespeare now-a-days. Since Daly died, the stage has gone to the devil; this star system has ruined it. I'll not go and see that opinionated ass mouthing and stalking about, and tearing a passion to tatters, supported by a lot of scared sticks. I've read a critique of the thing, and it's evidently abominable. The fellow actually cuts and rewrites whole scenes, to bring them down to the comprehension and standards of the time. I prefer to read my Shakespeare."

He glanced over his glasses at Cresson with a quizzical smile. "If it were not for our clerical friend here, I would propose that we look in upon some vaudeville performance; in a scientific spirit, you understand. I'd like to see just how much the art of dancing has fallen off since I viewed it in my youth in Paris. And even as consul there later, I used to remember the adage about the bow which is always bent losing its spring."

"Don't hesitate on my account," Cresson answered imperturbably. "I believe it has become

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the fashion for the clergy to make sociological investigations."

"And dancing was originally a religious exercise," the judge supplemented. "Did n't your friend King David dance before the Ark of the Covenant? It belongs to you gentlemen of the Church to restore the art to its former dignity and use. You should never have allowed the devil to capture dancing and the drama for his own purposes."

He suddenly reached out with his paper and touched the arm of a man who was passing Berwyn's chair.

"Uxbridge, you're the very man I want to see. Is there anything worth while at the theatres?"

The architect paused, and Berwyn heard the familiar, rich voice with an emotion that held him rigid. If his uncle should but glance at him, the game was very likely up; should the judge take it into his head to introduce them, it was inevitably so. But nothing of the kind happened. Mr. Uxbridge's companion was waiting, and he lingered only a few moments.

"There's just one thing worth seeing," he said judicially, — "a charming little creature at the Broadway Gaiety."

Mr. Faile laughed sceptically.

"You need n't go, if you don't want to," the architect retorted, with a chuckle. "She'll not miss

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you. But when a judge asks for an expert opinion, he ought to treat it with becoming gravity. Your manners have deteriorated, Faile, since you left the bench and buried yourself in the country."

"I admit it," the judge answered. "But you're sure your judgment has n't deteriorated also?"

"Go and see for yourself," the other admonished. "She comes on about half-past nine."

"Do you know who that man is?" the judge asked, when the architect had departed.

"He drew the plans for St. Basil's-in-the-Bronx," Cresson answered; "but for all that, I don't believe he recognised me."

The judge looked his surprise, and Cresson felt called upon to explain. "I went to him because he was the best architect in the city, and he promised to make me a sketch. I confess I feared it was too small a thing for him to remember, but the next time I called, I found he had done it. I saw the drawing, but not the architect. He left the details, and me, to his subordinates. That was a year ago, and I have n't seen him since."

"He's a great hand at work and play," the judge commented. "Any other man would have been dead long ago. We'll try to get him to take more interest in St. Basil's. We must have him out. But the question is—shall we go and see this little paragon of all the graces? She won't be vulgar, at any rate."

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As neither of the young men offered any objection, the question was settled. Berwyn felt that he was in the hands of chance, and decided to be quiescent. While they still lingered at the table, and on their way to the theatre, he listened in amused silence, or with casual comments, to the judge's further analysis of his uncle's character and achievements, thinking what a contribution he could make, if a whimsical impulse should once break the bonds he had chosen to impose upon himself.

Among other things, he could have told Cresson how the idea of a country church had probably appealed to his uncle's fancy, and how he had sketched it at odd moments, on any piece of paper he chanced to have in his clothes.

Presently, all thoughts on this subject gave way to anticipation of the extraordinary situation he was about to witness. It was difficult to imagine how Josephine had been able to conceal from her family the secret which he himself had discovered; but it was perfectly evident that he alone had the slightest suspicion of the identity of the charming little creature they were about to see. He knew how sharply the judge would draw the line between the man of the world and the father, for the type was familiar to him. And here was Cresson dragged into the scene also, the lover who had kept a secret from his *fiancée*, if such she were, only to discover

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in the most spectacular manner that she had kept a more important one from him. He felt that his adventures of Angeloro were mere moonshine compared with this story, and his fingers itched to write it.

How would Josephine behave? If she saw them, would she break down? This was the time to show her quality, whether she were to be the heroine of adventures, or merely a naughty, runaway child, haled home by an irate parent, to repent, and finally to settle down into a biddable wife, perhaps in the Rectory of St. Basil's. Berwyn thought the latter alternative the less likely, but preserved an open mind, awaiting the event.

He experienced a certain wicked satisfaction in the judge's determination to get good seats, well up in the front. Nothing was now lacking as a preparation to the *dénouement*; and he watched the stage hand change the numbers with an interest he had never before felt in that action.

When at last she entered, Berwyn's pulses were beating high. There she stood transfixed, paling to the very curves of her little mouth, her eyes growing large with terror. She could scarcely have failed to discover them sooner or later, for they sat directly in front of her, in the centre of the pit. Berwyn was relieved that she made the discovery at once. It gave her a chance to recover herself

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before the applause that greeted her appearance had died away. His sympathies were all with her, and when he saw that she was game, he could have shouted his approval ; but he merely leaned back and glanced at her father's profile. The two were alike, he reflected. They would carry it off well, and the scene, if there were one, would not be the common property of the world.

The judge adjusted his glasses with fingers that trembled slightly, and settled himself to observe his daughter's performance ; but he made no comment, and already the first flush had faded from his face, leaving him stern and grey. Cresson was sitting beyond, and Berwyn could only guess the tumult that was raging in his heart.

Berwyn had heard Josephine before, standing unobserved in the back of the theatre ; and her father's invitation had upset his plan to call for her this very evening at the stage door. Now he reflected ruefully that the opportunity he had let slip was gone, perhaps forever. He had wondered then that mere whistling could produce such an illusion of distant song ; but the performance was even better to-night, as if Josephine had determined that this effort, which might be her last, should also be her best. Perhaps her excitement was the cause of a new emotional note. In the hush of the house he felt that her power of wistful suggestion

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was falling like enchantment. She appeared very sweet and girlish, like a bride in her white tulle gown, and conveyed an impression of something delicate and evanescent, the mood of "over the hills and far away."

Doubtless Berwyn alone of the three men was cool enough to appreciate the art of the imitations that followed, from the various birds of the forest to the barnyard fowl. Josephine was now apparently in the rapt exaltation of a summer morning, now carried away by pure fun, so that the spirit of laughter swept over the house, to be succeeded by applause and calls for more.

Her manner of response was unexpected, and he wondered whether she had introduced it on the spur of the moment. With a comprehending glance at a group of noisy collegians in the nearest box, she imitated the note of a goose. Then, stooping suddenly, she pretended to catch the bird and carry it off, squawking wildly, under her arm. That was the end, nor could the repeated demands of the delighted youngsters bring her back.

The judge snapped his glasses into their case, and stood up. Berwyn helped him into his coat without a word, and the old man shook hands with them both as he bade them good-night. There was no variation from his usual courteous formality. He even forced a smile of grim humour, though its

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evident insincerity emphasised rather than concealed his inward mortification and anger.

"Gentlemen," he said, scorning dissimulation, "this is rather an unexpected ending to our evening. We must try it again some time. If you will excuse me — "

He left the sentence unfinished, but they understood well enough his destination and his purpose.

A few moments later, the judge stood, a grey, impressive figure, in the narrow hallway that led to the green room, eyeing with cool scrutiny a youth near by, who seemed a trifle ashamed of the roses he held in his hand, and a trifle defiant, but striving for the nonchalance of the man of the world he meant to appear. The two had long to wait, and a number of people passed them while they kept their watch upon each other, till the suspicion of each became a certainty.

At last Josephine came down the stairs, her skirts gathered in one hand, her cheeks burning, her eyes full of misery and rebellion. As the young man stepped forward, bent upon anticipating his older rival, the judge tore the offered flowers from his hand, threw them contemptuously on the floor, and ground them with his heel.

"Sir," he said quietly, "I am not aware that you are acquainted with my daughter. You are grossly impertinent."

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The boy's fresh cheeks paled, and he edged away with muttered apologies, leaving them alone.

"I don't see, papa," the girl protested stormily, "why you should be insulting to that silly boy. He meant no harm. There's no reason why you should make a tragedy out of it, and come after me in this manner, as if I were wicked, or a fool who could n't take care of herself. I suppose everybody knows your opinion of me."

The judge knew that everybody meant the two young men he had just left. He was very angry, and did not delay to declare his intention.

"I don't know what arrangements you have made with the manager of this theatre," he said coldly, "but I shall take steps to break them to-morrow morning."

"I suppose Mr. Cresson brought you here to-night?" she questioned, as they went out into the courtyard. "I suppose he has been spying upon me till he made the great discovery, and that his sense of duty compelled him to enlighten you."

"Keep still, Josephine," he commanded. "We will discuss this whole question when we can do so to better advantage. You are altogether too much excited to listen to any reason at present."

She proved the truth of the assertion by denying it, and during their passage through the long alley that led back to the street, she continued to

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talk, finding relief to her overwrought nerves as a woman must. It was chiefly Cresson who received the benefit of her wrath, a fact that surprised her father and gave him food for reflection.

"And I suppose he contrived to bring Mr. Le Strange along too," she ended, "for reasons best known to himself."

They were emerging at the moment into the glare of Broadway, and the two young men who had been the subject of her conversation confronted them. They were waiting for a car, having given the judge sufficient time, as they supposed, to get away with his charge. But her deliberate delay in the green room defeated this charitable intention.

They lifted their hats, and the change in her expression was magical. There was no trace now of anger, or mortification, or tears; she gave them a bright smile and an easy nod of comradeship. The nod and the smile were for Berwyn alone. She carried away a blurred impression of Cresson's black disapproval; but Berwyn's eyes followed her, so that her father's subsequent lecture was easy to bear. In fact, she scarcely listened to it, for she was thinking how charming Mr. Le Strange was, how much a gentleman. She knew also that he alone understood her, and that he admired her the more for the very thing which gave his companions such virtuous indignation.

CHAPTER XV

THE MIND BEHIND THE SCENES

THE next day the judge waited until his wife was alone and then came in with the paper, according to his custom. It was the room in which Mrs. Faile spent the winter mornings, when the sun was north by east; but as it progressed on its diurnal course, she followed in her wheeled chair, until five o'clock found her in the southwest part of the house, where she served tea in state.

Such was the small orbit in which she moved, but the journeys of her mind were limitless. Like Ulysses, she had seen cities and men in her day, and was a part of all that she had seen. Nor did a splendid past cause her to despise the meagre present. Everything she observed from her windows was of interest to her: the villagers, as she called her neighbours, passing and repassing on the raised road; the new church, just beginning to show its grey stone walls above the trees of the orchard; here and there the wooden dwelling, where once had been green fields. So the world went by, and she noted how it went: on the east afoot, in wag-gons, and in motor cars, on the west in railroad

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trains, whose times of passing had become familiar to her.

To-day, instead of sitting down to chat, the judge stood before her in silence, so that she suspended the needle above the fine work in her lap and looked up with a question in her eyes.

They were remarkable eyes in a way, — Josephine's eyes grown old ; and though they were somewhat impaired by needlework and reading, they held a brightness of will and intellect that was all their own. Sitting there at the window, surrounded by books, yet engaged upon a task so strictly feminine, a beauty in ruins and an invalid, she would have been a very pathetic figure, had she regarded herself with pity. But sympathy flows out naturally only to those who feel its need ; and who could penetrate with condolence that white armour of the mind ?

Mr. Faile searched in his pocket for the playbill of the previous night, and put it in her hands.

"Have you ever seen that document before ?" he asked, with a touch of grimness.

Usually a reposeful man, his emotion betrayed itself by the manner in which he thrust his hands into his pockets and walked about the room.

"I have, Mr. Faile," she answered calmly.

He came to a standstill by the opposite window and stared out awhile in silence, but his hesitation was that of one who has too much to say.

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"The vulgarity of it!" he commented at last. "Our little Josephine in her 'marvellous whistling specialty,' — the silly stage name she selected for herself."

"The announcement is vulgar," she admitted. "It could scarcely be otherwise; but I'm sure the child herself is not."

"Of course she is not," he retorted; "but no girl can do that sort of thing without contamination." He told the incident of her final exit, her imitation of the goose, her coquetry with the collegians, and it was plain that every word of the recital hurt him. "She did it too well. It was a regular vaudeville trick. You may be interested to know that it was the architect Uxbridge who advised me to go to see her. Of course he had no idea she was my daughter. To him she was merely a 'charming little creature,' — I believe that was the phrase. All the young rakes in town are crazy about her. She has become quite the rage. Her name is bandied about in clubs. She is showered with bouquets by callow college boys. I had the dubious satisfaction last night of witnessing her triumph in company with Cresson and his friend."

"Josephine came in with the whole story," she informed him. "I'm sorry you were so severe with her. But tell me about that Mr. Le Strange. She

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is so reticent on the subject that I begin to think she is taken with him."

He stared in astonishment at this unexpected turn, but ignored her request.

"And Josephine told me of your responsibility in this outrageous venture. However, there was no need of that. The minute I set eyes on her, I knew it was your doing. You took advantage of my absolutely regular habits to deceive me. I understood that you wanted her to yourself every evening, to read to you. And the earlier dinners gave a longer evening. It seemed reasonable enough. Even so, I was a miracle of stupidity to suspect nothing these two months. Was it fair to ignore me in such a vital matter? What could you be thinking of to expose Josephine to such a life?"

"Of her future," she replied. "You know, judge, that since we fell on evils days, — when Josephine was a child, — she has had no social opportunities such as a girl of her birth is entitled to, such as we gave her older brothers and sisters. There is practically only one avenue open to her by which she may attract the attention of the most desirable young men, and that is the theatre."

"Of the most undesirable," he corrected. "I don't want her to be thrown into that vortex. I don't want her to lose the flavour and fragrance of innocent girlhood by disporting herself before

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the footlights, like any pretty little waif of the streets. I was positively sick to see her there, the centre of all those unbridled glances, — young fools, flushed with wine, old codgers, cynically discussing her points and wondering how long she would last. Is it pleasant to you to have your daughter viewed in that light — ”

“It is a phase of the situation I do not think of at all,” she broke in firmly; “and I am sure she is proof against it. That is merely one of the incidents of her art.”

“Art!” He planted himself before her with a look of incredulous scorn. “What can you be thinking of? She whistles very prettily, artistically, if you will, but to call that art — ”

“It is on the way to art,” she said. “Of course, I know that this talent has its limitations, and I do not advise that she practice it beyond the present season. But Josephine has more than that; she has the making of an actress in her.”

He turned once more to his restless pacing of the room, impressed by the truth of her observation. Josephine’s whistling was good, but her histrionic instinct was better. It was this — and her personality — that had carried her trite specialty so far. Mr. Faile had heard whistlers in his day. It was an old-fashioned art, dying out, like the minstrel show, heard but seldom now, and usually with

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scant approval. What Josephine added to it, and not the thing itself, made the extraordinary appeal he had witnessed.

"I see it all now," he answered; "the method in what seemed sheer madness. It's a well-thought-out scheme, and does your head credit, but not your heart. Then you are planning the career of an actress for Josephine? Is that your intention? I beg that you will do me the honour of taking me into your confidence, even at the eleventh hour."

The time had come for her to assume the offensive. She had continued to ply the needle undisturbed, but now she inserted it in the material in her lap and met his eyes with a hint of indignation.

"I intended to take you into my confidence, but I was wise enough to avoid argument and friction until the soundness of my theory was demonstrated, as it seems to be now, by your own confession. This idea, by the way, was originally Josephine's. Instead of discouraging her, with the result that she would have become discontented and perhaps have done something desperate, I aided her to accomplish her purpose because I had another ultimate purpose of my own. My one aim is to make her look as beautiful as possible, and to give her an opportunity to become known to the young men of that world in which she has a right to move. I have good material to work with. Josephine is too

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much of a lady to be attracted by any one really vulgar. It will not be long before her quality is known, and then all petty annoyances will cease. There have been many good women on the stage. Not a few have made advantageous marriages, and have become established in a worldly way by their careers."

"In one thing, at least, we do agree," he admitted. "I should like to see her safely married. Last night has convinced me of the desirability of that. And I hope it will be soon. You will allow me to say that I don't like the method proposed for attracting the attention of some rich man. The cases you refer to are exceptional, too exceptional to be a safe guide. I know men better than you do, my dear, and their intentions. I would be willing to see her married to young Cresson here. I am not as ambitious, perhaps, as you are, but I think I know better where her happiness lies."

"If you only did!" she cried. "Josephine has always loved the flesh-pots, and always will. For once give me the credit of facing facts, while you theorise. I have suspected the attraction he exercises for her, but they are antagonistic in every point of view. She simply could not live as the wife of an obscure clergyman. I should n't wonder if she would run away from him. You remember how he induced her to set her birds at liberty by some

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ridiculous religious argument. She has never forgiven him for it."

The judge smiled, in spite of himself. "I have," he retorted.

"The birds were her teachers," she commented, "and useful to her, as well as a harmless diversion. Not that I care myself to litter up the house with untidy pets. But to return to the main subject, you see I have been wise enough to think for myself."

"You have been wise enough to think for us both, unfortunately. I don't wish to be ungenerous, but it was your advice in financial matters that brought us to our present position. I remind you of it merely to hint that you may sometimes be mistaken."

"If you had been more ambitious, you could have retrieved yourself," she told him. "Instead, you preferred to retire on a pittance to the country, a defeated man, and to spend your life among your books. I am doing what I can to reestablish the family in its rightful position."

The judge returned to his window, and his view of the outer world. He was sufficiently conscious of being buffeted for his faults to be able to bear it patiently and without a sense of martyrdom. Long years spent with an unemotional nature had taught him to be economical of his own emotions, and he entertained thoughts about his wife, rather

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than feelings. He noticed an old cat of whom he was fond picking her way daintily across the frozen grass, a miniature tiger, and the sight suggested to him the barrenness of this room, filled though it was with books and pictures and works of art. There was something almost inhuman in this independence of pets such as invalids are wont to love.

"Cresson is impossible," Mrs. Faile mused aloud. "I wonder that even you can think of it. But the other young man—I don't know—I have my impressions. You evaded my question about him. How does he appear to you?"

"As a possible son-in-law?" he demanded bluntly.

"Why, yes," she returned with frankness. "It is certainly in no other aspect that a young man can be of particular interest to me."

"If you want to know my true opinion, he impresses me very unfavourably from that point of view. I enjoy his society; he is a travelled man, and a clever writer, and he plays a good game of billiards. Morally, however, I believe he is rotten."

"I have been thinking," she answered,— "for I have nothing to do but think while I sew for Josephine,—that there is something unusual about his career. Does he live on what he makes by his writing?"

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"I never sounded him upon his income or his intentions."

It was plain that even the judge's patience was being strained to the breaking-point, but her purpose made her proof against his rebuff.

"He has n't the air of a newspaper man," she went on, "and his life has not been that of a man without independent means. I knew he was a gentleman the first time I saw him coming across the lawn, and one afternoon when Josephine brought him in to tea, his conversation confirmed the impression. Did he ever speak of a reverse of fortune?"

"Now that you have me on the witness stand, I can't say that he ever did."

"Then he may be merely amusing himself out here. There is something very mysterious about him. I gather from Josephine that Mr. Cresson knows practically nothing of his history. He found him consulting some old monument in the cemetery for genealogical purposes. That in itself looks like family. I wonder that you have n't weighed these circumstances."

"I will question Mr. Le Strange about his history, if you wish," he promised, with sarcastic deliberation. "I will find out whether he is some King Cophetua in disguise, and a desirable husband for our beggar maid."

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"I wish you would," she answered. "No one could do it more tactfully than yourself."

"Thank you for the compliment," he returned dryly. "But about this absurd whistling." He paused before delivering the blow, conscious for the first time of the pathos of her fantastic plans. What consolation this foolish scheme had given her! He was concerned for her disappointment. "I am going down to the theatre now to see the manager, and to break his contract with Josephine, no matter what it costs financially and otherwise. I have quite made up my mind on this point."

"You will regret it," she warned him. "It will be a great mistake. I know Josephine better than you do."

"I think not," he answered, "but time will show."

She nodded her acquiescence in this appeal to the future, and offered no further protest. For many years she had ruled the household from that chair, and she had no intention of abdicating her throne now, even though the judge had shown this unexpected power to turn. When he was gone, she remained motionless for some time, gazing from the window, and then resumed her sewing with rapid fingers, while her mind began to reconstruct the wreckage of her plans.

CHAPTER XVI

AT THE AVIARY

THE following Sunday afternoon, Cresson and Berwyn took the path that led through Bronx Park, past the conservatory, with the Zoölogical Gardens as their ultimate destination. Cresson had agreed to the author's proposition, wondering at his own acquiescence. He had put himself in a false position by telling his secret, as a debtor puts himself in the power of a creditor. It was one of those burdens he should have carried alone, a problem he should have solved by himself. However veiled the judgment of his listener, he knew himself written down a snob, and smarted with humiliation.

Within him there was a giant beginning to grasp at the bars he would presently burst asunder; but as yet he accepted Berwyn's lighter treatment of himself, and his attitude toward Josephine Faile, because he found no handle for resentment. He had lost his one chance when his companion, on the way home from the theatre, praised Josephine's spirit, her beauty, and her clever little act, assuming that their point of view was the same. At that time Berwyn stopped short of some comments a

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man of the world might have made, and therein lay his power to torment with impunity. Cresson had longed to be uncivilised, but had held his peace,—an ominous silence, however, that warned Berwyn to avoid the subject thereafter. Now the author rambled on in his desultory way, taking his subjects where he found them in the objects about him. Through the discriminating comparison and apt phrase he disclosed a rich background of reading and experience, glimpses of cities and men leading back into other times.

Cresson refused to be charmed. He listened indifferently, and thought of Josephine. The black disapproval she had imagined in his face, when she found him with Berwyn on Broadway, was not the self-righteous condemnation of old, for Cresson had grown. How or when he had changed he could not have told, himself. It was in no simple mood that he had seen that bright face emerge from the shadows. There was jealousy in his look, no doubt, not of Berwyn, but of all the men whose admiration she had thought so worth the winning; his sweet wild rose, torn up by the roots and passed from hand to hand! The sight was agony to him. Most of all, there was blank despair. How could he ever retrace his steps, and win his lost love? He too had been in the wrong, so much more than she.

Cresson was by no means lacking in imagination.

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Infinitely the greater artist, he knew the fascination of public applause ; but his heart contracted with pity for the thinness of her talent. It was so deficient in depth and power, and destined to be so short-lived. He would rescue her if he could, save her from selling her birthright of dignified womanhood for this meagre prize ; but he knew at last the pride he had to deal with, even if she still loved him, and this he no longer dared to believe. He feared that he could find no place for repentance now.

In a wistful mood, he imagined his present companion away, and Josephine by his side, talking with him of herself as she had never done, because he had never taken her seriously enough to know her wholly. As for any duty he might owe to Le Strange, the sceptic and pagan, it was not till years afterward that he thought of their days together as an opportunity he had neglected. Perhaps he would have been more than human had he sacrificed the man in this case to the priest.

The unusual mildness of the winter still held, and they entered the gate of the Zoölogical Gardens in a crowd scarcely less numerous than that of a summer day. It seemed to Cresson that the entire Ghetto of the east side was pouring into the Bronx. This was the handwriting on the wall which told of the time, perhaps only a few years distant, when

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his church would be surrounded by Jews, its short period of usefulness past, unless he turned it into an instrument for the work he was commanded to do. The temptation assailed him to wait until his duty came, instead of running to meet it. Never had he been more rebellious. What hope was there in those dark, bearded faces, seared by centuries of persecution, and hardened by material cares? It was significant that his companion made no comment upon the company in which they found themselves, though Cresson imagined him mentally spanning the distance between the praying-shawl and the pulpit.

The spotted deer were still out in their ranges, and a few of the feathered folk sat behind their bars: dusky horned owls, staring steadily against the light; the golden eagle, motionless on his perch, viewing the passing throng with scornful eyes, as though, in his character of the national bird, and the native born, he would express his opinion of this horde from southern Russia; the rough-legged hawk from Labrador; the yellow-headed blackbird, —all the more robust dwellers of the woods.

"There is Miss Faile," Berwyn said suddenly, "entering the bird-house. Oddly enough, I was just thinking of her."

"Not so oddly, perhaps," Cresson returned.

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"There's an obvious association of ideas, if you saw the bird-house first."

"I think I did, which explains the psychology. It must be one of her favourite haunts, I fancy. Suppose we join her?"

Cresson could suggest no logical objection, though he had no desire to see Josephine under circumstances so different from his recent imagining. However, he was through with wearing his heart on his sleeve for the observation of this man, and pride gave him a well-assumed indifference. When they reached the broad plateau, surrounded by low buildings of yellow brick,—the houses of the lions, the primates, and the birds,—he stopped to call attention to the seals in the centre of the place, some of them dozing in their concrete caves, others lifting their sleek heads in unexpected places above the water of the pool.

By the time they passed through the rotary glass doors, the object of their search was nowhere to be seen. They paused at each cage, in their progress toward the turning that hid her from view, though the screaming of the red and blue macaw and of the roseate cockatoo made all comment inaudible.

The collection would have been sufficiently interesting, had their thoughts not been otherwise occupied: green canaries from the Azores; the minute

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and melodious grass quit of Cuba; the gray-feathered little mockingbird, *mimus polyglottos*, sitting silent on his twig, forgetful of his many tongues, or discouraged by the noisy clamour of his neighbour, a white-breasted parrot from the Amazon. Here was the American flamingo, clothed in a tight coat of pale pink feathers, supported on one long, trembling leg, while he disposed mysteriously of the other; the red-crested cardinal of South America; and those two strange whims of nature, the toco toucan, all red and yellow beak, and the concave-casqued hornbill of India.

Berwyn made some comment upon the reasonableness of those symbolists to whom each colour suggests a sound, but the gist of it was lost to his companion in the din. The unrest, the contention, the tropical fervour of the place, was infectious to Cresson, ever sensitive to harmony or discord, and his heart beat fast. The scene became a metaphor, as if he were following his lost love through the protesting gates of hell.

They reached the further gallery, and the noise became less insistent, reduced for the most part to a continuous twittering of smaller birds. For this reason another sound, that of a man's voice, made itself heard immediately, as a foundation upon which the lighter melodies were built up.

At the end of the aisle, by the further door,

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Josephine stood, talking with Mr. Uxbridge. The architect was looking another way, but Cresson knew the man instantly, as one recognises the great, or those whom one has any cause to admire or fear. For the first time, he felt that he might have cause to fear Mr. Uxbridge, remembering that he was a bachelor and rich. And was he so old, after all? It seemed that he could be attractive to women, at any rate. The disquieting conjecture was justified by Josephine's tilted profile, by the little airs she gave herself unconsciously, while she enjoyed the flattery to which she would fain pretend indifference.

The architect's back was somehow as eloquent as his words appeared to be. It was the back of a man of the world, a fact which the fashion of his coat proclaimed to those who can read such signs. He held his silk hat and cane in his left hand, with something of old style gallantry, and motioned with his right towards the birds which, perhaps, at that moment illustrated his remarks.

Cresson remembered the way in which Mr. Uxbridge had recommended Josephine's beauty to her own father, while unaware of the relationship between them. At the time it had seemed inoffensive enough. There was certainly nothing gross or cynical in his remarks; but then, the girl he praised turned out to be Josephine, and therein lay the sac-

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rilege. He wondered whether the architect had made any discoveries in the interim, whether he knew now who she was, and he determined to find out. He forgot all about Berwyn, in his absorption, and went forward.

He spoke to Josephine first, and received something very like the cut direct, but undismayed, giving her the benefit of every possible doubt, he held out his hand to her companion.

"How do you do, Mr. Uxbridge?" he said.

The interruption was by no means welcome, though the architect accepted the proffered hand a moment, as one who awaits developments. His curious, dark eyes, which seemed to absorb light as ink does, rather than to have any of their own, searched the young man's face questioningly.

"Have you lost yourself out here, looking for St. Basil's?" Cresson continued. "If so, I can show you the way. I was hoping you would come out some time and pass judgment on the work."

It was true that Mr. Uxbridge, obeying the whim which prompted some action on a dull day, and lured forth by the mildness of the weather, had come out to the country for the purpose Cresson assumed; but he had met with an adventure much more to his mind.

"Ah," he said suavely, "you must be the rector himself. I remember you now. I did have some

thought of finding the little church in this *Ultima Thule*, not that it is actually necessary, for I believe everything is going on well. But I have just met a young friend of mine here, whom I have not seen for some time. I think, sir, that I shall take another opportunity to see the work. I understand the site is most attractive."

"I did not know that you were acquainted with Miss Faile," Cresson said boldly, "though I remember you praised her art."

The eyes that searched his own seemed to become a shade darker in their instinctive veiling. Uxbridge was thinking rapidly.

"So you were one of those young fellows at the club, the other night," he hazarded. "Well, well, trust a judge to play the sphinx. He should have let his old friends know that it was his little girl who had blossomed out in that fashion, and set all the town by the ears."

He turned to Josephine. "My dear child, I am doubly delighted at this discovery. You must accompany us to the church. Is it some distance, Mr. Cresson? Are there any carriages about here?"

Josephine would have been pleased enough to drive with the architect alone; but Cresson had filled his cup of offense to overflowing. The reference to the meeting at the club left her still unenlightened as to Mr. Uxbridge's part in directing

her father to the theatre. She persisted in laying that sin at Cresson's door; and now he was pursuing her further with his virtuous protection. She gave him scant credit for allowing the architect to believe that her father knew her secret. A realisation of the fact that those exhilarating nights on the stage were at an end, and that she was to have no more of the incense of admiration, was cause enough for tears, were she alone. In her short talk with Uxbridge, whose name she now learned for the first time, she had not reached the point of telling him that he would not see her on the stage again.

"If you will excuse me, Mr. Uxbridge," she said, looking past her lover, "I must be going home. But won't you stop in for a cup of tea on your way back? I'm sure mother would be glad to see you."

The architect declared that nothing would give him greater pleasure than such a renewal of old ties. He was ashamed to think that he had not looked his friends up since they deserted civilisation, and that he did not know the house; but doubtless Mr. Cresson would be his guide.

Josephine was obliged to acquiesce in this proposal, but she did so tacitly. Perhaps, she reflected, Cresson would now have the tact to come only as far as the gate, and there discover that he had

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another engagement. At least, she had given him good reason to do so.

"Well, then," she called back to the architect, "I shall see you again."

She passed out of the door, and took the short cut that led through the woods, while the two men turned in the other direction to find a carriage.

Only then did Cresson remember that he had not come to the bird-house alone. He glanced this way and that, as they passed along, wondering what had become of his companion; but Berwyn was nowhere to be seen.

CHAPTER XVII

THE TIME AND THE PLACE

JOSEPHINE hurried away, excited and happy. The unexpected turn of events consoled her in large measure for her father's severity and Cresson's interference. The afternoon which had begun so wistfully in a lonely walk promised to end in real diversion. She crossed the Pelham Road and took the least frequented route, which led past the old stone snuff-mill, the Lorillard mansion, and thence, by a rustic footbridge below the falls, into the grove of hemlock.

The beaten path from the elevated station to the Zoölogical Gardens lay on the other side of the park, and few of the crowd returned this way, even in summer. Now she found herself entirely alone, though it was still early in the afternoon. The wide spaces of silence, contrasting so vividly with the confusion of the bird-house she had just left, greeted her senses gratefully. It was all so peaceful and safe and open that she was annoyed at a perverse remembrance of a grim tragedy on the Pelham Road; then her annoyance became resentment at her lover's use of the event in his argument

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to curtail her freedom. Nevertheless, she looked back, and was startled to see a man following at a rapid pace. In a moment her apprehension was turned to relief at the recognition of Berwyn.

"You seem to be running away from something," he called out, as he came nearer.

"I might say that you seem to be doing the same thing," she retorted.

His pursuit had entirely changed the complexion of her intended walk through the woods, colouring it with an element of romance. This was the time and the place; and her uncertainty in regard to the loved one brought its fascination. It was much to be rich in gifts still ungiven.

"I was running away," he admitted.

"Not from the lions in the Zoo?" She was somewhat disappointed that he did not admit his pursuit of her. "But where did you come from? I thought I had the woods all to myself."

"You did n't see me in the bird-house, then?" he asked. "I came with Cresson, and took French leave when I saw the company you were in."

"Mr. Uxbridge? But you were n't running away from him?"

"I was, though, and thereby hangs a tale which I have about made up my mind to tell you, if you are sure that you can keep a secret." He was walking beside her now, swinging his cane, and

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looking at her with more excitement and animation in his face than she had ever seen. There was amusement, too, and intense enjoyment of a situation. His spirit was infectious.

"How delightful!" she cried. "Do tell me. I love secrets, and always keep them to myself."

"Well, then, it is this. You mustn't call me by the name of Le Strange any more, except before others. When we are alone, my name is Berwyn, George Berwyn. I am commonly supposed to be drowned, and my uncle, Mr. Uxbridge, shares that impression with the rest of the world. A recognition this afternoon would have been embarrassing; so I ran away."

"Did n't I guess that you were a very mysterious person?" she demanded triumphantly. She gave him a quick glance, into which a new and charming shyness had crept unawares, and turned the name over in her mind till she decided that she liked it. Whatever the reason of his incognito, she assumed that it must be romantic, — some persecution he would avoid, or some ideal pursuit, or a disappointment in love. At the last possibility her mood suffered an unreasonable depression, and her tone became almost casual. "You practically told me, that evening we took the train to the city together, that you were —"

"Not what I seemed?" he finished, seeing her

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hesitate for the phrase. "Trust a woman's intuition to fashion a story from the merest hint."

"But you haven't told it to me yet," she reminded him.

Berwyn laughed at this feminine touch and began in a disjointed, almost diffident, manner. There was none of the art of the adventures of Angeloro, no heightening of effect, now that the subject-matter was personal. She was the more deeply impressed by his lack of pretension, by his commonplace narration of events as thrilling as any she had ever read. He disclosed his circumstances and position only casually, or by implication, but she divined it all: the experience that turned the wide world into a familiar playground, the superiority of mind and aims which caused the life she would have loved to pall upon him. She was deeply flattered by his confidence. The fact that he mentioned no adventure of the heart relieved, but did not convince, her. He must have had many, and wearied of them also. The compliment of his preference for her was the greater. He became quite a heroic figure in her eyes, this man who had survived shipwreck, and had come back, like one from the dead, to amuse himself for the time by making a reputation as a writer under an assumed name, until he chose to return to his friends and his possessions and his former life. This was the

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very essence of poetry. He was like the Lord of Burleigh; and if she did not love him at the first for himself, as the village maiden loved the painter, she loved his adventures now, which might be the first step in that direction.

Poor Cresson! What could he offer to compete with this mystery and these glories? A record of tyranny, comparative poverty, and a profession which seemed to her the enemy of joy. The deep sadness of the gospel of pleasure was hidden from her eyes by the sunny ripple on the surface.

They had come by this time to the old Lorillard mansion, a plain, grey stone building, perched high on the cliff above the falls of the river, suggesting in its situation and in the material with which it was constructed the palace of some petty duke in the wilds of Germany. The place marked a turn in their course and their conversation. Berwyn, following Josephine down the steep path to the narrow bridge that spanned the rapids, was full of appreciations, and deplored in his whimsical fashion the commonplace architecture of the deserted house, so unworthy of its setting.

"I have heard my father say," she told him, "that the Lorillard mansion was quite a centre of gaiety, half a century ago. He remembers being invited to a house party there, and that when the

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dancing was done, he looked out of the window to see the employés going to their work in the snuff-mill. This park was all the Lorillard estate then. The open spaces were covered with roses, from which they extracted attar of roses for the snuff."

"'Times change, and we change with them,'" he quoted. "We consider smoking the more venial habit; but I can remember my grandfather's gold snuff-box, which was doubtless supplied from this very mill."

In the centre of the bridge he paused, and bade her turn to observe the effect of the cold winter sun shining through leafless branches upon the walls above them.

"I am always on the trail of romance," he mused. "Now that the house is half concealed, we may imagine a turret or two, may we not, and a few breaches in the walls? And I think you would do very well as a study for Enid."

"But Enid was a beauty," she objected; then bit her lip and coloured. It was not what she had meant to say, but she found herself laughing the next moment at his frank appreciation of her embarrassment.

"That's the reason I made the comparison."

His eyes were fixed upon her with an admiration and indulgence that were like a caress. There was something in his attitude that made her feel

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both child and woman ; but it was the woman in her that he addressed now. He glanced up and down the gorge, at the still pool above the falls carrying broken twigs and withered leaves over the shining edge into the foaming mass of rocks ; and the suggestion of sadness which always lay beneath his smile grew more pronounced.

“ Now, if I could only do equally well for Sir Geraint,” he mused. “ If we could hear somewhere in the woods the clang of the smith’s hammer on the anvil, fashioning me a sword with which to do battle for your freedom — ”

Her untried heart caught his wistful mood vaguely, but the difference between sunrise and sunset was there, though the twilight might seem the same. What she could not know was the experience with other women to which she owed his gentleness, his tact, and his understanding of her needs ; nor that he was consciously playing a familiar game, saddened by his own skill. Perhaps he was sorry for her, but it was a sentiment that would not swerve him from his purpose.

“ However, mine must be the most inglorious rôle of the wandering minstrel,” he resumed. “ When I listened, the other night, to your exquisite imitations of the birds, I was moved to write you a poem.”

For a moment the mortification of that experience

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returned to vex her heart. If he had witnessed her triumph, he also knew of her humiliation. But she had carried it off bravely then, and she did so now, the more easily that his compliment was new to her, and one for which she had a peculiar appreciation. To her, writing was an inspirational achievement, and especially poetry. Verses seemed as spontaneous as the song of a bird. Of the art that concealed the art, the laborious search for the right word, she had no conception.

"Did you write a poem to me?" she questioned eagerly.

He nodded, and brought the folded paper from his pocket.

"I've been waiting for some such opportunity as this to give it to you; and fortune has been more indulgent to me than I dared to hope. Such surroundings would throw a glamour even over doggerel, and I fear this is not much better."

"You must read it to me," she said, "but not here. Let us go above the noise of the falls."

He acquiesced, and followed her up the steep path, noting the ease of her ascent. There was in her a touch of the wild, something virginal and strong, yet delicate. Dressed as she was in a costume as far as possible from the tattered gown of Enid, the blend of associations was novel, even in his experience.

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She outstripped him in the climb, and he found her seated on a rock at the summit, waiting with a piquant lift of the head and a hint of triumph in her smile. The soft, white panel of her waist gleamed between the dark lappets of her velvet coat, like the breast of a bird.

"I see that you've chosen a seat only large enough for one," he said, "so I suppose I must stand and deliver."

He looked down at the gleam of the river through the trees below, from whence the roar of the falls now came in a subdued monotone, and up at the enormous hemlocks.

"I confess," he continued, "that this theatre is a little overpowering for the reading of such a slight effort as mine. It is bringing the smell of the lamp into the forest."

She merely laughed impatiently, and settled herself to listen. The softened light made him look suddenly younger, and without reflecting upon the change, it produced in her a new sense of parity and comradeship. Berwyn was really somewhat embarrassed, with the self-consciousness which few writers, and especially few poets, can escape; but he read the lines simply and well.

"Little sparrow, her delight,
With your eyes of amber bright,
At a word

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You will fly your golden cage,
When her grief she would assuage,
With her bird.

“When I see my darling smile,
Lifting up her hand the while
To your bite,
Can her tender heart divine,
Can she know what woe is mine,
At the sight ?

“Then, when all the sport is past,
And you fold your wings at last
In her breast,
Knowing that her love is true —
Oh, that I might be as you,
There to rest !”

The poem was not what Josephine had anticipated, but more personal, more intimate and tender. She had a humorous appreciation of the fact that the picture he drew was purely ideal, and a sad thought that it might have belonged to the time before she set her birds at liberty. The message was one of love, but the form in which it was put made it possible to avoid the issue. She was glad of the chance, and rose hastily, taking the paper from him and hiding it away in her muff. She was flustered, and said little ; but he walked beside her, contented with the progress he had made. He had acquired a feminine knowledge of the fascination of the point they had now reached in their relationship. Whereas a primary man would have taken

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her in his arms, and so perhaps have lost all by his precipitation, Berwyn's patience was due to the tastes and perceptions of civilisation's secondary or tertiary products.

There was one thing that troubled him for a few moments. It was too late to tell her that his poem was a translation, even an old one, remembered from his college days, and revived because of its peculiar appropriateness to her. Perhaps he had assumed that she would recognise the source, or it may be that he had counted deliberately on her ignorance of it. The poem was without a title. If she had never heard of Catullus and his Lesbia, she was not likely to become enlightened in the immediate future, unless she showed the verses to Cresson or to her father. Berwyn weighed the possibility, only to dismiss it. He knew a young girl's heart too well to fear such a confidence.

"I invited Mr. Uxbridge to come back for a cup of tea," she told him. "He has gone up with Mr. Cresson to look at the church. I must hurry, to let mother know."

"Then I will fade away at the edge of the forest," he returned. "Not that my uncle would not be glad to see me, but that he might be too glad. I confess to a quandary in regard to the *dénouement* of this particular story. It is so much easier to write one."

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It was the first time she had thought of this practical difficulty from the viewpoint of the uncle's emotions. That he had cared enough for Berwyn to build him a cenotaph meant a shock at the discovery of his mistake ; and she had sufficient experience to realise the possible danger of such a crisis. But, blinded as she was by her companion's gentleness to her, she failed to see any element of cruelty in his long deception. It was still a romantic story, lacking only the last chapter ; and she exercised her ingenuity on the problem as they walked homeward.

The roar of the falls grew fainter, until the open glades of the forest held no sound except their voices and footsteps, and the occasional cawing of the perennial crow. Berwyn would almost have feared the grandeur of the scene, had he been alone, for he had something of a pagan's dread of nature's solitudes. But Josephine was the hamadryad that dispelled the oppressive loneliness and awe.

The hemlock grove was a wonderful bit of the Sierras planted within the limits of the city, in summer time the haunt of artists and lovers, now as free from intrusion as when the Indian flitted through its checkered shade. There was no ice on the surface of the little river, seen in fitful gleams below them, but here and there a patch of snow lingered in a secluded hollow. This was the very soul of the park, and never before had it failed in

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its appeal to Josephine; but now she was too much absorbed to note the cawing of the crows, the vast breathing that filled the gloom like a distant murmur of the sea, the fantastic cliffs and bowlders, or the ancient trees, sending down deep wells and shafts of light upon the drifts and patches of brown needles. Nature stands ready with her deeper message only for the hungry or the troubled heart.

The problem of the final chapter was still unsolved, when the pathway took a sudden downward dip to the stone arch that led into the Faile estate beyond the stream. They passed the bridge and stood at the edge of the forest, irresolute. There, not two hundred yards distant, stood the old house, bare now of vine leaves and grey in the wintry sun. Josephine could see her mother sitting at the southern window alone, the eternal needlework in her hands, and she challenged her companion on the inspiration of the moment.

"I see that Mr. Uxbridge is n't there yet. Won't you come in and wait till he arrives? Then we can all see the ending of the story."

"You tempt me," he returned, "but no. Your mother is an invalid. If there should be any excitement — a scene —"

She was so plainly disappointed that a compromise suggested itself to him.

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"I will just step in and pay my respects to Mrs. Faile. Those windows command a view far up the road. You can see him coming in time to give me a chance to walk out the other side of the house. I can plead a pressing engagement—only a moment to spare—a train to catch—something like that."

She nodded, eager for the adventure. "I'll manage it."

"And remember," he warned her, laughing, "I am still Le Strange."

Berwyn did indeed say that he had come in only to pay his respects, and must be going soon, but the remark was perhaps interpreted freely, or scarcely heard; for Mrs. Faile ordered tea, and precious time was taken in its preparation.

It seemed to Berwyn that the maid would never return from the distant kitchen with the kettle of boiling water,—a practical disadvantage in old-fashioned methods which he had not before experienced. His back was toward the window that commanded the road, but it was some relief to him to see that Josephine remembered her part, as she went about the room, pushing the round little mahogany table to her mother's chair, and setting out the cups and saucers.

This would be a charming scene to recall, when it had ended successfully. Doubtful though he was

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of the event, he was able to appreciate the grace of Josephine's movements, the level sunlight irradiating her hair into a mist of gold whenever she passed the southern window, her quick glances down the road, her droll messages of assurance from behind her mother's chair.

The conversation with Mrs. Faile was not significant. It began with a rehearsal of his meeting with Josephine. He had not even waited to make the acquaintance of the architect, and he regretted that he could not wait now until his return from the hill. The renewal of the hint was equally lost upon his listener. Mrs. Faile launched forth into placid and leisurely reminiscences of the time when she had first known Mr. Uxbridge, and he listened with no sign of anxiety in his steady eyes. She was more pleased with him than before, and felt that her intuitions were justified. His tricks of speech and dress were those of a gentleman, such an one as she would like to have her daughter marry, provided he could give her an establishment. But her mind was at sea in regard to his family. She was no mean genealogist herself, and knew the names that had stood for something in New York society for several generations; but Le Strange was not among them.

The maid brought in the kettle at last, and Mrs. Faile turned this matter over in her mind as she

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poured the tea, groping for the right turning to the desired goal, conscious meanwhile of her own graciousness, and of the still beautiful hands that hovered over the cups. As for Berwyn, he never forgot them, nor the blaze of their diamonds in the sun. It was one of those scenes that remained in his mind ever after, to its minutest detail.

Chance saved him the inevitable question. There was a rattle of wheels in the roadway, and he rose at Josephine's signal.

"But surely you are not going without finishing your tea?" her mother asked. "And Mr. Uxbridge is such an entertaining man."

"Unfortunately, Mrs. Faile, I must. My train is nearly due. You will allow me to come again and make my peace?"

He bowed over her hand in his most winning manner as he made this request, and she granted it indulgently. Uxbridge and Cresson were already at the door, and they could hear the architect's deep voice, interrupted by a hearty laugh. The judge had met him in the hall, and was receiving his old friend's reproaches for his secrecy at the club.

"By Jove, Faile, I've got an excuse for coming out to see you now which I never had before."

When the judge led his guests into Mrs. Faile's sitting-room, they found her alone. Josephine had

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beckoned to Berwyn, and he had followed her through a western window, out on to the verandah, and down the steps that led toward the park. Her mother watched this movement, at first with silent astonishment, and then with a flash of comprehension in her faded eyes. How young Josephine was! But Mr. Le Strange would not misjudge her; he was too much of a gentleman for that. She reflected that the affair must have gone further than she had supposed.

CHAPTER XVIII

DEBORAH SILMON'S SON

THE architect was a vital personality. His deep, mellow voice ran before him, like a troop of outriders announcing his coming; and when he entered a room, he seemed to fill it.

"Mrs. Faile," he said, "how long is it since we met? But don't tell me — I don't wish to know. I don't wish to be informed of the extent of my delinquency as an old friend, nor of the flight of time. You understand how it is in the city. We don't mean to be selfish or forgetful, but we're busy, frightfully busy. When our friends move out of the circle, we register a vow to go and see them. We mean it at the time, but we don't go, even if it's only a ten mile journey. We go to Europe instead."

He took the chair so recently vacated by his nephew, accepted a cup of tea, and sat beetling at her with his heavy, nervous eyebrows.

"Don't explain, Mr. Uxbridge," she returned. "The fault, or rather, the misfortune, is partly our own. We would n't have become so lost to the world if I had n't been an invalid, almost from the time we came out here."

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"Ah, yes — yes," he murmured. "I'm very sorry — very sorry."

To Mrs. Faile's mind, their fallen fortunes were the real cause of their neglect, more than the distance, more than her invalidism ; but of this she said nothing.

"And you know the judge," she continued.

"I know him," the architect assented, turning to the spot where Mr. Faile sat silent, with his cigarette and his cup of tea. "A modern Timon. I've upbraided him, when we met at the club from time to time, for his superior attitude toward the world. I've felt involved in his judgment, for I love it myself. It's a very interesting world, and the only one we know anything about ; so let us make the most of it."

He caught sight of Cresson, and his dark eyes twinkled.

"With all due respect to our young friend here," he supplemented.

"We might argue the question, Mr. Uxbridge," Cresson suggested, in the same spirit. There was a kinship between the two, as between Berwyn and the judge, based upon the similarity of temperament. Both were tireless workers, both were ambitious ; and their mutual enthusiasm for the Gothic in church architecture had produced an unexpected result that afternoon. As for the older man's voluble

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scepticism, Cresson took it with a grain of salt. To borrow a metaphor from the judge's favourite sport, he suspected an effort to make him rise.

"Argue the question, my dear fellow!" Uxbridge cried. "Do you imagine a novice like yourself can tell a sermon-proof old codger anything new about the immortality of the soul? We'll argue nothing. But I like to see a man who is so sublimely foolish as to give his life to building up a parish. Go ahead — provide a beautiful place for your people to come to once a week — hold up high ideals — some of them will stick. I fear you'll get no thanks, and will end your days in an old man's home, unless you marry a rich wife. However, that's your concern, not mine."

Even Mrs. Faile joined in the laughter that greeted this tirade. The jest was an excellent one, now that the possibility of Josephine's becoming involved in it had grown remote.

"Now I must tell you what Mr. Uxbridge is going to do to help along this folly," Cresson said to the others. "He's going to put a stained glass window in the chancel of the church."

"Solely in the interest of art," the architect explained. "The tracery of that window is exquisite. I ought to know, as I drew it myself. To fill that wall with cathedral glass would be a sacrilege."

"I should love to see it," Mrs. Faile said, with a

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touch of wistfulness. "There are so few beautiful things being done out here. We are all grateful to you."

"Why, they can't utterly spoil such a lovely suburb," Uxbridge remarked. "The sweep of the park from the hilltop is magnificent. You'll always have that, and these splendid trees." He waved his hand in his dramatic way toward the window. "This must be a paradise in the springtime, — greenness bursting out everywhere."

Josephine came in at the moment, having made the circuit from the verandah through the billiard-room and front hall, instead of returning by the window that had offered her and Berwyn an egress. Her colour was never more exquisite, her eyes never more bright; and the short trip had given her fine hair a charming disorder.

"You must have had a great deal to talk about at the church, Mr. Uxbridge," she said prettily. "I beat you home by half an hour."

She comprehended Cresson too in the comment, by a friendly glance. Now that he was there, she could not be uncivil; and besides, she felt that the issue between them was at an end. She was even a little sorry for him, much as she was pleased and excited by the events of the afternoon. The architect had risen eagerly.

"Gad, madam," he exclaimed, turning to Mrs.

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Faile, "what do you mean by letting this beautiful child of yours loose on the town? She has quite turned all our heads."

"Her own head is turned too, I fear," Mrs. Faile answered, with a critical look at her daughter. "The judge has decided that the experiment has gone far enough, and I'm sure I agree with him."

Josephine poured herself a cup of tea, and with an odd little ripple in her voice, she laughed. This new severity, this change of base, was not inexplicable to her. As she sat down and raised the spoon to her lips, she was self-conscious under the architect's admiring gaze, and affected, too; but the affectation was winning. Even Cresson, tormented as he was by jealousy and disapproval, found her irresistible. The further she drifted from his ideal, the more perverse she became, the more he loved her.

"Uxbridge," the judge interposed, "it's a mistake to praise children to their faces. Sometimes they're precocious, and understand more than we give them credit for." There was a dignified rebuke beneath the jest that made itself felt, and he changed the subject to relieve the pause. "By the way, Josephine, where is Le Strange? Did n't I see him come in with you a short time ago?"

"Mr. Le Strange had an engagement," she explained, raising her blue eyes innocently.

"I was sorry," her mother added, addressing the

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architect. "He's a most charming young man, and I think you would have enjoyed meeting him. There's something mysterious about him, too. He made his appearance in this neighbourhood under Mr. Cresson's ægis; but I believe Mr. Cresson does n't know much more about him than the rest of us."

"Le Strange," Uxbridge said, before Cresson, addressed by implication, could respond. "That's a familiar name to me."

"Have you read his stories in the papers?" the judge asked.

"I'm not much given to reading stories, but I did read those adventures of What's-his-name. They're capital."

"You said the name was familiar to you," Mrs. Faile reminded him. "This young man seems a gentleman, but I can't place him."

"One of my Norman ancestors, an architect of Canterbury Cathedral, was a Le Strange," Uxbridge answered. "That was what attracted me to the stories in the first place, before I thought of reading them for their merit. The name was rare enough to pique my curiosity. Perhaps your friend assumed it for literary purposes."

Josephine studied the speaker's face, breathlessly interested in the situation, wondering how he would take the discovery when it came, wondering, too, in

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her romantic heart, just where her own part might be cast in this unfolding drama.

The short winter day had come to an end suddenly with the sinking of the sun below the rim of the reservoir across the valley, paling the bright vision of the girl at the window and shadowing the faces of the others. There was a pause in the conversation, during the lighting of the chandelier, whose glass pendants, jarred by the lighting-stick, tinkled musically a moment like a chime of tiny bells.

Mrs. Faile, baffled in her first enquiry, but still possessed by her favourite subject, turned to Cresson.

"And your name is unusual," she commented. "It has a French sound also."

"I believe it is French, originally," he answered, stirring uneasily. He had an intuition of the abyss that yawned before him. They all seemed to be looking at him with an inquisitorial purpose in their eyes, and he felt impelled to go on. "However, I can't claim anything older for it than a Huguenot date. The first Cresson came over to England at the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. We have become pretty well Anglicised by this time."

"Was your mother English?" Mrs. Faile persisted. "What was her name?"

Whether this were a mere mania, like a Chinaman's habit of asking a woman's age, or a touch of malice with a purpose, perhaps but dimly felt by

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the questioner herself, Cresson did not stop to consider. What impressed him was the inevitableness of this crisis. Mrs. Faile seemed nothing less than an instrument of the divine purpose to remove the mask he had worn so long, and that too in the presence of the girl on whose account he had clung to it the more tenaciously. His disobedience had brought this result, that he was to lose Josephine ingloriously, meriting her contempt by his cowardice.

"My mother's name was Silmon," he said quietly. He experienced a curious relief in the announcement. He did not look at Josephine, but he might as well have done so, for the name meant nothing to her.

Uxbridge put down his cup, and looked at the speaker with new interest.

"I am reminded of Madam Deborah Silmon, the brilliant Jewess who took New York by storm with her singing in the late sixties. Your mother was not related to her, Mr. Cresson?"

"That was my mother," Cresson answered. "After her marriage, she went with my father to California. Did you know her?"

"Know her!" the architect echoed. "There was no lover of music in the city at that time who did n't. She was at her best in oratorio. I shall never forget how she used to sing *I know that my Redeemer liveth.*"

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"That!" Cresson cried. "Did she become a Christian?"

He had forgotten even Josephine at the moment. His heart was like running water, and he waited breathlessly for the answer. The architect regarded him with amazement.

"You ought to know better than I, Mr. Cresson. Now that I think of it, I never heard. But whether it was art or conviction, you felt that she did know it, when she sang that passage."

"She died when I was very young," Cresson said, in a low voice.

Uxbridge turned to his contemporaries for corroboration and sympathy.

"You remember how she packed Niblo's night after night. But nothing is so unjust as the ephemeral fame of a great musician. If a man writes a book, or carves a statue, he has some chance against the tooth of time. Even an architect may be remembered for a few generations, — some for a few centuries, — but a musician's work dies with him. The sound of the human voice lingers only during the lifetime of the listeners, and yet singers give more intense pleasure than any other artists. I have always somehow resented the rapid oblivion that overtakes them. It would seem that they must pay this price for the privilege of special power. I should n't be surprised, now, if

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Miss Faile had never heard the name of Madam Silmon."

"I never have," she admitted. Then she looked at Cresson reproachfully. "You never told me."

He saw at last that she would not have cared that his mother was a Jewess, if he had told her. His deception was the only cause of her complaint. In fact, this knowledge would have increased his picturesqueness in her eyes. It would have made its own appeal to the artist in her blood. She would have been quick to defend him—a woman's right—had others dared to think less of him on this account. But an accidental and forced confession was fatal. This was not the place for an explanation, and fortunately the judge interposed.

"I must say, Cresson, that modesty has its limits, though I can appreciate any reaction against Mrs. Faile's genealogical passion, which, as I have often tried to demonstrate, is the highway to madness."

"I should say that a knowledge of our ancestors is a great help toward knowledge of ourselves and of our responsibilities," Mrs. Faile retorted, with some spirit. But she was not one to air a family difference before company, and addressed herself to Cresson with unusual graciousness. "I remember when the judge took me to hear your mother sing. You have reason to be proud of her talent; it was all Mr. Uxbridge says of it."

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"I meant to ask you, Mr. Cresson," the architect said, "why you chose the name of St. Basil for your church, but now I begin to see light. Madam Silmon was a Russian, was she not, and Basil is the patron saint of Russia?"

Cresson nodded, but did not speak. He saw in Josephine's face that she remembered his explanation, that the name was chosen for its alliterative effect and because of its rarity in the English Church. It seemed that he was destined to drink the cup of humiliation to the dregs, to see himself at last as he was, through her discerning eyes. If there was one thing that saved him from signs of weakness, it was anger against his father. These contemporaries of his mother had so admired her genius that they honoured him for her sake. Now he saw how he had adopted his father's insular and conventional point of view, so that he despised what was best in himself, and its source. Some glimpse of the tragic story was given him at that moment: the woman of great gifts throwing herself away on the handsome Englishman, who married her, partly to gratify his vanity, partly for the fortune which he was destined to sink in a venture so typical of his race. For the first time his heart was stirred by a chivalrous devotion to the memory of his mother. How strangely every step of the revelation coincided with his vague promptings and

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with his vision of duty! Cresson had never before divined the meekness and devotion of the Christian ideal, but out of his exposure and humiliation the knowledge was born.

The conversation drifted away to other topics, and his equanimity returned. He felt a new strength within him, and an unaccustomed assurance; not the old-time arrogance, but the peace of abnegation, the reward of those who lose their lives for the sake of Christ. He suddenly remembered his evening service at the hall, and rose to go.

But Josephine's hand in his at parting worked like witchcraft in his brain. Was he to lose her, then? Might he not do his duty, and win her too, now that she knew all? He would take new ground with her, would tell her his purpose, and ask her to share his lot. It was madness, but the warm touch of her fingers made him mad with the old desire, a hundred times augmented. He saw no reason to accept defeat.

"I think I will take Miss Faile with me to the evensong," he announced.

The proposal startled her, but she did not refuse. Instead, she turned to the others with a piquant little air of humour and enquiry, almost as if she asked permission to go, or demanded that they share her appreciation of his proselyting zeal. And she was swayed by him again, irrationally. It must be

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confessed that Berwyn suffered in her imagination by comparison with this splendid young man, who would carry her off to church against her will. She had a mind to go; and if he was determined to thresh out the old subject again, she would be equal to the emergency. While she condemned him for the revelations of the last hour, it was nevertheless true that he was now invested with something of the interest of a new personality. What would he say, or do?

"That's a good idea, Cresson," the judge remarked, smiling. "I don't keep very close tab on my daughter's church-going, but I'm under the impression that she has become a backslider of late."

"I can see that you are anxious to get rid of me, father," she retorted, "though I don't know why you should be so virtuous about it yourself."

"I'm waiting for the new cathedral to be finished," he answered, with a chuckle.

"Your time of waiting is short, then," Cresson warned him.

The reminder had its influence upon Josephine. It gave Cresson something of a right to her company for what was in all probability the last time, and she hurried away to get her hat and coat. The architect was keenly disappointed, but made no sign. The new church was an excellent excuse for coming again, now that he had found the way.

CHAPTER XIX

THE LAST EVENSONG

IT was now not quite five o'clock, but the world was dark, for the days were the shortest of the year. Cresson would be a little late for the service, and he walked rapidly, so that his companion was almost breathless in her effort to keep pace with him. He glanced at the afterglow of the perfect sunset, fanning upward behind the level line of the reservoir. At either end of the plateau the squat stone towers suggested two giant sentinels who had sunk to a recumbent posture, overcome by weariness. Further to the south, the lofty brick tower of an electric light plant gained a spurious dignity by the emphasis it gave to the serene amber depths beyond. Besides these objects there was nothing, it seemed, between the eye of the beholder and the end of the world.

Cresson felt the exhilaration of this immensity and peace, as if Nature, cursed with fire and tempest that night he parted from Josephine by the river, now shared the blessing of their reunion. The raised road looped about the base of the hill on which the church stood, and presently its dark bulk

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took the place of the towers against the sky. He was reminded of the architect's intended gift, of which she had not yet heard because she was somewhere outside with Le Strange. It was evident, too, that they had walked home together from the bird-house. He awoke suddenly from his fool's dream of reconciliation with a clear purpose. A loathing of deceptions, both his own and hers, took possession of him. He knew at last, by the unhappiness his duplicity had caused him, how foreign it was to his essential nature. He would speak the truth from now on, no matter what fabric of love or ambition came tumbling about him.

"How large the church looks up there against the sky," Josephine remarked, almost timidly. Woman-like, she found silence oppressive, and must say something, if only to bring out the new man that had been revealed to her. She was rewarded beyond her expectation.

"Mr. Uxbridge is going to give us a chancel window," he returned. "You were outside with Le Strange, were you not, when I told your mother and father about it?"

"Yes," she answered, "I was."

"And he walked home with you through the park this afternoon?"

"He did walk home with me," she said, and her tone was distinctly defiant.

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In the light of a lamp they were passing he turned and gave her a new and penetrating look.

"How refreshing the truth is, Josephine, after so many lies! It may sting and bite, but the pain is a kind of pleasure, is it not? At least, I feel so myself. What did you think of me this afternoon, when you discovered the secret I had guarded from you so carefully? Come, tell me, I want to hear."

"I remembered how I had deceived you, too," she answered.

"That's generous, and kind-hearted, but not an answer to my question. Let me answer it myself. You must have had some such thoughts as these: Here is a man who professed to love me, but he deceived me from the first. He even stooped to a small lie to cover the big one. And you must have thought that in a man who made no profession of spiritual leadership it would have been bad enough, but in a priest of the church it was contemptible. If you did n't pass some such judgment upon me, you were lacking in moral perception; and I know you too well to think that. Besides, I saw it in your face."

"Well, I did, then, Cyril," she confessed. "But why do you force me to tell the truth?"

"Because I love it," he answered sternly, "and always have. My lie never allowed me to rest. I was haunted by doubts, visions, and portents, but

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I would not heed them; I was afraid of losing you. I feared you would think less of me for my Jewish blood, and so I concealed the fact. I had always done so. At college I concealed it because I wanted to get into a fraternity and into the musical club. I even voted against a Jew who was proposed for my society. It was the meanest thing I ever did, and it has haunted me like a crime ever since. As a matter of fact, it was one. Then, when I entered the Church, I thought the truth might injure my career. It probably would not have done so any more than it would have injured me at college or with you; but you see how the poison of lying, when it once enters the blood, permeates the whole system. And so I went on, making a lie but not loving it, I think, until an accident exposed me to you, above all people in the world! But no, it was n't an accident. There's no such thing as accident. It was all a matter of cause and effect, planting thorns and reaping thorns, logical and inexorable, God's own law and purpose."

In his fierce passion of confession, he made no allowances for himself, and this too was characteristic of his pride. There was no reference to his father's influence, no excuse on the ground of his mixed inheritance, no reference to the deep convictions and faith that had moved him when he left the college for the seminary. He let her think the step

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one of cold calculation; and, unfortunately for him, for them both, her divination was unequal to the task of supplementing his bitter and meagre story.

"But think of me," she said, wishing in some way to spare him. "Think how I deceived you about the theatre."

"I forced you to it," he declared. "You were right in supposing that I would never consent to such a thing. I never would have. But I understand how you came to do it. I was mad with jealousy of every man in the audience that night, and yet I could see that you had your right to get what you wanted out of your talent."

In one thing Berwyn had unwittingly done his rival a good turn that afternoon, when he told his story to Josephine in the woods. He had described the meeting at the Union League Club, and his own narrow escape from discovery. Incidentally she had learned that it was the architect, and not Cresson, who had suggested the visit to the theatre. She thought of her suspicions now with some compunction, which his next words deepened.

"There is no comparison between your deception and mine, Josephine. There are men's virtues and women's virtues. We expect a man to tell the truth because lying is cowardice, and nothing is more contemptible than a cowardly man. Women have been forced into deceptions by men since the begin-

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ning of the world. They have their own characteristic virtues to compensate, like self-sacrifice and fidelity. I think you agree with me?"

He seemed determined to leave himself without excuse. He judged his sin more severely than she did, and she felt that she had no reason to claim either of the virtues he mentioned as peculiarly a woman's.

"I don't know," she hesitated. "It seems to me that such distinctions are artificial."

"They may be," he admitted. "But let us agree to speak the truth to each other from now on. Is it a bargain?"

She might have feared the hint of returning intimacy more, had his tone been less business-like and companionable. She did not know him to-night. He seemed to ask a new adjustment of their relationship, based on the frankness of friends, and this was what she had once demanded of him, when the riddle of their disagreement proved insoluble. Yet she did not wish to tell him the truth about many things; Berwyn's secret, for example, the little poem which even then was concealed in her dress, — things which he surely had no right to know. A refusal would imply a desire to deceive, and so she agreed, with a mental reservation of her own. This was no game of Yes and No, in which an answer of some kind must be given, provided the

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fatal monosyllables are avoided. She promised to speak the truth, that is, if she spoke at all; but she might keep silent, and so preserve the letter of her compact.

Cresson appeared satisfied with the point he had gained, and surprised her by a sudden dropping of the personal. From the time they reached the top of the hill to the north of the church and, after one short glimpse of the gaslit valley below, began to descend into the village, he became silent. It was the absentmindedness of a man who is about to preach a sermon, and has not yet selected his text; but Josephine, not knowing how the events of the afternoon had stolen his time of preparation, was puzzled. To her there was neglect of herself in his silence, and something portentous, as if he were planning to put their agreement to a test. Had she known the real reason, she would have been surprised, and the surprise would have been an unconscious tribute. Readiness to speak well at a moment's notice was an ability she assumed in him.

The hall was filled when they entered, and the hush was something more than the pause before the service. Cresson was late, and the wonder as to whether he would come at all was beginning to make itself felt, shown by the occasional turning of a head. Josephine caught glances of curiosity and surmise, and sunk into a chair, suddenly em-

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barrassed. The meaning attached to her coming thus with Cresson alone was evident, and she was relieved when he presently emerged from the robing-room and followed the little choir down the aisle.

And now a change began to take place in her mood, and his. What the night could not do, and their opportunity together, the service itself accomplished, weaving its spell of tenderness, regret, and vague emotion. She listened to his dramatic reading of the superb liturgy with an attention almost painful, at one moment deeply moved, then perversely reflecting that he was producing the effect he desired with conscious effort. It was the first time she had attended a service here since her appearance on the stage, and her point of view was altered. Frivolous by comparison as her own art was, and in spite of the difference in its motive, she now divined in it a certain kinship of mood with his. The impish question would obtrude itself, How far can a priest of histrionic temperament and gifts be honest? But she too had woven a spell, and shared it, and her verdict was not severe. She would have been pleased to think that sincerity and art are mutually exclusive in the service of the Church, — it would have flattered her penetration, — but she could not.

When the time for the sermon came, it seemed

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to her that he was confused in finding his text. She was becoming concerned for him when he turned the page he sought and read: *Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*

Josephine sat up with a pang of apprehension. Was he about to make a confession before his people of his unworthiness, to lay bare the secret of his life? She had once read such a scene in an English novel, and she felt that if it were to be repeated here, she could not endure the strain; she would rise from her seat and leave the hall. He was standing free from the lecturn now, in the gate of the chancel rail, his keen grey eyes sweeping the hall with a certain brooding suggestion of intended flight. Suddenly they met her own, brilliant with this new emotion beneath her shadowing plume and bright hair. It seemed to her in the uncertain gaslight that he smiled slightly, as if to reassure her, and a faint sigh of relief escaped her parted lips.

Cresson began quietly to express the wonder a modern reader might well feel that the great apostle to the Gentiles should entertain a doubt of his own salvation. He recapitulated his trials by land and sea, and contrasted them with the ease and security of the present day follower of Christ. On the face of it, the text might suggest a warning to the

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ministry alone ; but who were the ministers of the gospel of Christ, and what was preaching ? This artificial distinction between the priesthood and the laity had been in times past the source of superstition and misconduct, as if a man could be saved by his office. It was not so in the beginning. Christ had said that all were priests and kings unto righteousness, and to all his followers alike he had given the power to remit or retain sins. It was to all the disciples, and not to the apostles alone, that the mysterious words recorded by St. John were addressed ; and if they meant anything, they meant that not by any ecclesiastical machinery, but by the practice of charity between man and man, the burden of offences might be removed. And so with preaching. To profess Christianity was to share in the priestly function of preaching the gospel of Christ, not by word of mouth alone, nor from the pulpit of the church, but in every act of life, in every passing judgment upon the acts and motives of others.

As Josephine, freed from her first anxiety, listened to the development of the theme, she was impressed by the fact that this apparent levelling down was in reality a levelling up, until every one in the room was caught in the rising tide of duty and opportunity. Instead of the spectacular revelation she had feared, a revelation which by its

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apparent humility would have laid the greater stress upon his office, Cresson's one desire seemed to be to share an experience, and to infuse a quickening fear. It was not a churchly sermon, — from one point of view it was distinctly heretical, — but it was sublimated reason and common sense, and it laid hold of the hearers like a strong hand, shaking them from the self-complacency of systems and forms.

The ending was dramatic, a picture of final shipwreck, suggested by the metaphor in the text. Thus far Josephine's mind had appreciated the argument, but now her heart felt it. In vain she told herself that this was art, and that her own presence was doubtless the cause of his exceptional inspiration. For the first time she saw his mother's race in him, the warmth of imagination, the richness and depth of feeling, and also the vanity. She insisted upon this last quality, and tried to be the critical observer; but in the end she too sat in deep abstraction, her eyes reflecting the awe of those who get a rare glimpse beyond the verge of the here and now.

When the service was ended, she retained her seat, striving to appear unconscious of the interest of those who passed her. She could hear Cresson bidding his parishioners good-night at the door, and gazed steadily at the chancel, where the girls of the Altar Guild were closing the books and tak-

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ing the flowers from the vases. Presently one of them approached her with the carnations in her hand.

"These are for you, Miss Faile," she said simply.

Josephine rose to her feet in distressed protest, but she saw that she must accept the gift, and her cheeks burned. With quick intuition, she divined the youthful tragedy behind the impulsive act, the renunciation of a dream of love, and a wistful admiration of herself.

"You must burn them, you know," the girl added.

"Burn them," Josephine echoed, puzzled. "Why is that?"

"Because they have been on the altar ; it is one of the rules of the guild."

Josephine promised to burn the flowers, and it was the first thing she spoke of to Cresson when they left the hall and began to ascend the hill. She supposed he would share her view of the act as a superstition, one of those customs of the Church surviving from the early days, when a special sanctity was believed to attach to certain things. To her it was all one with holy water and sacred relics. But he surprised her by his answer.

"I wish you would, Josephine."

The request seemed a touch of pedantry, rather than of superstition, for though she had always

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been incurious of his religion, she was aware of the predominant intellectual quality of his mind. Flowers were usually a delight to her, but those she held in her hand suggested melancholy thoughts, and she wished she might throw them away.

"Who was the girl that gave them to me?" she asked. "It was sweet of her."

"I did n't notice," he answered indifferently. "I believe they take turns, a month about."

"She was very pretty," Josephine remarked.

The drift of her comment was apparently lost upon him, and she wondered whether he were really unaware of the romantic attitude toward himself which gave a double meaning to the little duties of the guild. She herself had detected it at once, in the days when mere curiosity led her to the hall to see the young minister who had come to start a new church in the neighbourhood. Fear of seeming to enter into this competition for his regard had been one of the causes of her infrequent attendance; but Cresson never had eyes for any one but her, and she saw that it was so now.

Josephine wished it were otherwise. If he only cared for the girl who had given her the flowers, she would help him in his work, and he would be happy. He refused to lend himself to this distinctively feminine arrangement of his destiny, however, and she found it useless to pursue the subject.

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As before the service, his present mood was inexplicable to her. He was still in the afterglow of his passionate appeal, weary, yet exalted, drunk with the spirit, moving in an atmosphere of sound, broken sentences, and drifting lights. The orchestral mood survived the symphony that gave it birth.

With every step toward home the spell he had woven upon her grew thinner, until it shredded away like a drifting mist. Her thoughts outran their progress. She hoped that Mr. Uxbridge would stay to supper, and that she could see him again, listen to his conversation, and speculate upon his probable reception of the stupendous news that lay in wait for him. It was his relationship with Berwyn that constituted his chief fascination for her, though she enjoyed his admiration, and had an instinctive appreciation of him as a man of achievement.

Every vestige of the sunset had faded from the west, and the sky was dark as midnight. The church on the hill was now a mere shapeless bulk beneath the stars. Cresson glanced up at it in passing, and when he spoke, she realised how soon their diverging thoughts had put the width of the world between them.

"It will be hard to leave that work," he said; "but I must go, as soon as the church is finished and I can find a man to take my place. It will be a matter of only a few months now."

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"Leave it," she echoed, wondering. "I thought it would take years. Were n't you going to build a parish house and rectory, too?"

"Yes, but another can do that as well as I, perhaps better. I have a work that is all my own, that no one else is quite as well fitted for; I mean a mission to the Jews. After what you heard this afternoon, Josephine, I need n't explain the reason further. I think you understand."

"Oh, don't do that!" she protested. "When you are doing so well here, don't you see that it is your duty to remain?"

"I've tried to see it that way, and I would like to, but I know better."

"It would be so difficult," she persisted, "so fanatical. Isn't it just throwing away your life to take Christianity to a people that don't want it?" She asked the question boldly, for she had heard of the multiplicity of synagogues among the orthodox Jews of the east side, and some echo of their bitter controversy with Christian workers had reached her ears.

"Why, yes," he assented. "That will be losing my life, in the sense you mean, and finding it in Christ."

His exaltation filled her with dismay. She saw that he would do it, no matter what arguments she might use to prevent him. Her old influence with

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him, which had once made him waver, was gone. She was deeply concerned for him, yet with it came a great relief that he would release her at last.

"And I want you to share the work with me," he went on.

"I!"

The monosyllable was more than volumes of protest. It summed up all their discussions in the past, and gave her final refusal. But he would not accept it.

"When I saw you in the hall to-night, I knew that we were one in purpose, even though you felt it only dimly at a passing moment. That was the real you, Josephine. I lost your love by lying. If I had told you the truth at first, if I had asked you to do a supremely difficult thing, you would have done it. For I don't believe you really care so much about the things you think you love. So now I do tell you the truth, in the hope that it may not be too late."

"If you only knew me," she cried desperately; "how shallow and pleasure-loving I am! But I am a delusion with you, too. That sweet girl who gave me these flowers — she loves you. Did n't I see it? Here, take them — they are yours. Don't you see what I mean — where your happiness really lies?"

He thrust the carnations from him. "I am not

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speaking of happiness now, but of love and duty. They are well-worn words, but they are the road to happiness — the only way to reach it. I have tried the other road, and so have you, and look at the result. While we chased that phantom, did we ever overtake it? Won't you try the other way with me now, make the plunge, not with reasoning, but just because something in you tells you it is right?" He stopped her at the words and took her wrist firmly, turning her frightened face to the light of one of the roadside lamps.

"But nothing in me tells me it is right," she declared. "I am just the same shallow, foolish, unspiritual little Josephine you have always known, bent on her own way. You must let me take it."

"I think I must," he answered, smiling, "now; but I shall still hope that it will turn."

They went on again and came to her gate. During the last steps he took her hand and kissed it as they walked. She feared the parting from him, lest the old fierce desire should flame up once more; but that was his farewell.

The architect was at the supper table with her parents, as she had hoped. She arranged the carnations in a vase and placed them as a centre-piece before taking her seat.

"Where did you get them, Josephine?" her mother asked.

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“From the altar,” she answered. “When they are withered, they are to be burned, if you please.”

It was far from her intention to make light of Cresson then. Her real feeling in regard to him was one almost of subdued awe, as if he had been pronouncing a doom she could not escape. But this was her respite. She was excited, and hungry for the spice of worldliness and wit with which she associated their guest. Only when her father took up the subject with one of his cynical comments did she feel that somehow she had betrayed a trust. Uxbridge did not seem to share the amusement of the others, and she saw his penetrating eyes upon her, as if he would read her thoughts.

CHAPTER XX

THE BUILDING OF THE WINDOW

ST. BASIL'S-IN-THE-BRONX was nearing completion. It was Gothic, of the simpler rural English kind. There was neither transept nor clerestory, and the buttresses terminated below the eaves, without those pinnacles which, like pointing fingers of a supporting hand, add grace and aspiration to the impression of strength. Deprived of these well-known elements of style, one might question why the church told no tale of economy, and seemed larger than it really was.

The richness of the edifice lay all in its windows and its tower. They were large windows, occupying most of the space between the buttresses, with beautiful traceries of cut stone. At the end of the chancel, recessed some twenty feet beyond the nave, the altar window filled practically the whole width, — a wall of glass. Mr. Uxbridge was quite right in saying that, as he had made this the main feature, the whole effect depended upon the kind of glass that was put there.

Viewed from the parkland below, the church satisfied the eye by its proportions. One hundred

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feet in length, it seemed larger because of its isolation. The distance from the base of the tower to the top of its four plain pinnacles was exactly twice the distance from the ground to the roof-tree of the nave. This elevation above the roof was perfect, so that the tower appeared neither lowly nor pretentious. In detail it preserved the same golden mean between excessive ornament and bareness. It was placed in the centre of the south front, overlooking the widest view. Its lowest story formed the vestibule to the church. The arched entrance was deeply recessed, but without carving; above were two lancet windows; then came the disk of the clock, with its iron hands and figures; and finally the bell-room. Here one of the architect's hobbies asserted itself with good effect. He widened the traditional Gothic apertures to a generous size, and saved the roof from the effect of inadequate support by a simple, strong tracery of stone, behind which, from any point of view, the bell could be seen swinging to and fro when it rang.

As Berwyn and Josephine ascended the hill one mid-week afternoon in January, it was this feature of the tower which attracted his notice and called forth his praise.

"There's an Italian characteristic grafted on to a Gothic plan without incongruity," he remarked. "My distinguished uncle has solved the problem to

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a nicety. A bell ought to be seen as well as heard. Then it seems a live thing, dancing with joy or swaying slowly with grief, as the case may be. One of the most charming things in an Italian town is the sight of so many bells against the sky. I remember being in Venice the day Cardinal Sarto was elected Pope, and witnessing the patriotic celebration. All the church towers were alive."

"But slats would throw the waves of sound down into the valley, wouldn't they?" she asked him. "As it is, won't they be scattered in the wind above?"

"That's a discerning criticism, I believe," he answered, with an admiring glance at her lifted face, and the delicately lined brows puckered against the light. "However, my uncle is not only an artist, but a mechanician besides. I fancy the peaked roof will shed the sound downward, as well as the rain."

She waived the point from a more personal interest suggested by his reference to the architect.

"I was almost frightened to death, Sunday," she told him, "when Mr. Uxbridge came to see us. It seemed as if I could n't get away to put the red cushion in my tower window. When I did, you were already coming across the lawn."

"It was a narrow escape," he admitted, laughing. "I saw our danger signal just in time."

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"Mother still wonders why you never happen to call on Sunday afternoons any more, when he is there. I believe she is going to write you a special invitation."

There was query, as well as amusement, in her look. He knew that she would like to ask him how much longer this secrecy was to continue.

"Then I shall rake up a special previous engagement," he answered. "But this game of hide and seek can't keep on forever. We must find a way to end it soon."

Berwyn had reached a point in his love-making when he felt that something definite should be done. His association with Cresson was becoming an armed neutrality, and he feared some violent outbreak from that passionate nature, should the extent of his clandestine intimacy with Josephine be discovered. He resented the strain of constant finesse. Was he trying to make a fool of a good man, that he should be compelled to use such diplomacy? It was absurd, and yet some quality of judgment in Cresson had brought about this result. It was high time for him to strike his tent once more, and be gone. The only question he now debated was, whether he should take Josephine with him as his wife. It was evident that he must either forsake her utterly, or marry her; and he could not let her go. There was the stimulus of winning her from Cresson, in addition

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to her own alluring quality ; and afterward, the reconciliation with his uncle would be easier through her.

They reached the church door, and stood looking over the valley before going within. This strange winter, almost free from storms and snow, had allowed the building of the church to go on without interruption, so that now the shell was practically complete. It might have been a day of the Indian summer, in mid-November, except for the greater bareness of the branches and the uniformly brown hue of the soil. The air was still and bright, with just an added tang of cold in sheltered places.

The quiet of the church gave them the impression that it was deserted, but at their entering they saw figures of men moving in the open window at the end of the chancel.

"Cresson has gone to the city for the day," Berwyn said frankly. "That's why I proposed that we take a look at the church. He thought the window would be put in to-morrow, and intended to come and see it. He'll be disappointed, for it's an interesting process. Suppose we wait and watch it ourselves?"

She acquiesced, relieved to know that Cresson would not find them there, yet concerned for his disappointment. She knew the love of the work which had caused him to watch the placing of

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almost every stone; it was a pity that he should miss this final satisfaction.

Berwyn found a seat upon a pile of boards beside the door, and here, with the whole vista of the church before them, they sat and watched the work. The manner of it was quiet and mysterious. There was no hammering, and the voices of the men reached them in broken murmurs. Now and again one of them would descend from the scaffold, select a section of glass from the crate beside the chancel wall, and lift it solicitously into place. Evidently every space had been calculated to the minute fraction of an inch, and nothing remained but to fasten the copper wires with pinchers about the slender iron cross-bars.

The lower border was already laid, and they exchanged guesses in regard to the figures presently to be upbuilt. This was like sitting in a *camera obscura*, looking through the open shutter at the view beyond. The side windows were still covered by the oiled paper which had been put there pending the arrival of the glass, to protect the workmen from cold. The effect was a uniform yellow twilight, except where a ray of the westering sun, penetrating a rent, descended to the rubbish that littered the finished floor. Far up toward the chancel a small fire of charcoal burned in an open pan, where the workmen came to warm their stiffened fingers.

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Berwyn found Josephine's hand beneath her long cloak, and held it in his own. Her tender palm grew warm, and she trembled slightly, but made no protest. There was no shock of surprise to her in his quiet and masterful possession. Every glance of the eye, every smile and discriminating compliment, had led gradually to this act. She sat expectant, and with a curious sense of guilt that she should surrender to Cresson's rival here, of all places in the world.

A strip of meadowland had now emerged above the pale green border of grape leaves; then a sandalled foot, and purple fleur-de-lis. Berwyn knew something about most artistic processes, and he surprised her by his knowledge of the one before them, telling her of the successive steps, from the making of the cartoon to the final fitting of the glass.

"I had a friend once who did such work. He kindly allowed me to hang about his studio, and to follow him to the shop. I can see that this is going to be an exceptional window, but I can't really keep my mind on it." He looked down at her, smiling. "I am thinking only of you, Josephine, and what a charming allegory this window will be to us of a beautiful story reaching its completion, if you will only do as I wish."

It was the first time he had addressed her by her

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given name, but that was nothing compared with the possible goal his words suggested.

"What you wish me to do?" she echoed faintly.

"Yes," he said; "I want you to run away with me and get married. I am mad about you — I can't live without you. Let us give every one a grand, final surprise, — my reappearance from the depths of the sea, and with the loveliest little girl in New York as my wife. We'll open up the old place in town — What do you think?"

"I think it would be dreadfully unusual and improper," she declared; but the adventure of it stirred her pulses, and he knew that her protest was not fatal.

"Of course it would," he assented. "That's why I proposed it. Any one can do the conventional thing; but think of the sensation! What could be more jolly?"

She was suddenly seized with one of those deep emotions which a man must ever view as a mere spectator, until, in the course of years, the love of one woman has illuminated his heart. She withdrew her hand, and her eyes were full of tears as she left him and went out into the sunlight alone.

He followed, undismayed, and his calmness of speech and manner quieted her.

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"Let us talk it over reasonably together," he urged.

They began walking about the church, picking their way between the scattered stones that still encumbered the site. She did what a woman so often does, and a man so seldom; she told him of another love, weighing Cresson's against his, in an agony of doubt. And he gave her the answer she wished to hear.

"Cresson is a good fellow, Josephine, but if you had really loved him, you would have been married by this time. It was this doubt that prevented it, and, believe me, the doubt is right. You are too intellectual and well balanced to yield yourself to his illusions. Don't mistake me. I have the greatest respect for the Church's ethical teaching and humanitarian work; but when a man goes beyond that, and demands that you accept his definitions of the unknowable, you realise that there is something of the fanatic in his nature, and you shrink in fear. There's no telling where such delusions may lead. You could n't be happy with a man like that. You would stand outside the charmed circle of his mysticism, judging him, and judged in turn; and if you could not follow, you would finally drop to an unimportant place in his life, thrust beyond the pale. It is always so with the religious temperament. If Cresson would only marry one of the

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girls of his church, he would be perfectly happy, and she would help him with his work. That's just what he will do, in time."

He had spoken her very thoughts, and she turned to him in new confidence, her tears gone. His appreciation of her understanding had not been without its intended effect, and she wished him to share the final wonder.

"Mr. Cresson wanted me to marry him, not to share in this work, but in a mission to the Jews. How could I? Even if I loved him, how could I?"

"I had an inkling of some such development," he told her, "from a conversation with him on the subject of his mother's race. But what could I do to dissuade him? The case is pathological."

It was fortunate for his suit that Josephine scarcely understood the last word, and missed entirely the contempt it implied. He would have said more, had he dared, but his unerring instinct warned him not to try to make his rival ridiculous by recounting his confession of that stormy November morning. And unwittingly he had scored another point. It was a shock to Josephine that Cresson had told any one else of his intended purpose. The fact deprived her last interview with him of something of its special value and significance.

They had reached the chancel end, and their conversation was interrupted by one of the workmen,

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who asked Berwyn for the time of day. The two men exchanged some comment upon the merits of the window, while she studied its unintelligible obverse, and idly noted, through the still unfilled space above, how the rafters of the roof within vanished backward in a long succession. When they resumed their walk and their argument, she met him with a new difficulty.

“It would be such a shock to my mother. She likes you, and I don’t think she would object to an engagement. But to run away and get married —”

He was prepared for this also, as indeed he had anticipated it. He told her that she might write a letter and send it back by a messenger, as soon as they reached the city. Mrs. Faile would not be left one night in anxiety, and the shock could scarcely be greater than if she were told by word of mouth. Thus he outlined and elaborated the details, answering her objections and quieting her fears, while she walked beside him, absorbed and wistful.

She did not doubt his love; she was not one to be surprised at such a tribute. If she questioned her own heart, she did so confusedly. What she saw with clearness was his wealth and social position, and the fact that he would be acceptable to her parents. His proposal was, after all, legitimate, having just enough of irregularity and daring in it to make a strong appeal to her wilful nature. She

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was dazzled not only by these circumstances, but by the romance of the whole story, his and her own. A taste of life had been given to her, only to be withdrawn. Now the cup was held to her lips once more, a permitted draught with all the flavour of the forbidden. Why should she not drink of it?

They made the circuit of the church again and again, pausing each time to note the progress of the window, then resuming their course. It was like a symbol of their talk together, which ever returned to the point from which it started. The window space was nearly filled, and the sun was rapidly dipping down toward the rim of the reservoir across the valley.

"We must go in and see how it looks," he suggested at last.

It was not that he cared for the window, but he longed to take her in his arms somewhere there in the shadows. As for Josephine, a fear of this very thing had driven her past the door till now; but why had she not turned toward home?

Through the gathering darkness of the church the window flashed upon their eyes with a surprise that held them dumb. Even Berwyn's pulses cooled, and he stood entranced. There was the scene complete at last—the Virgin and the Child. They stood alone in the central panel, with not another figure to distract the attention and diminish their claim.

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The meadows rose gradually to a low line of distant hills, whose horizon was touched with light from beyond. Was it just before sunrise, or just after sunset? And whither was the young mother going through that mysterious landscape, bearing in her arms the Light of the World?

Berwyn spoke discriminatingly of this and that detail: of the graceful drapery; the exquisite tints of the two faces, one so full of maternal tenderness, the other so radiantly innocent; of the cool harmony of greens and blues.

"But, after all, the chief merit lies in the simplicity and feeling," he added. "There's no affectation, no conventional device to indicate more than mere humanity. It's just any beautiful young mother with her child. Look at that little hand."

"No, it is not any mother, nor any child," she answered.

The protest was true, and he was vaguely disquieted. He feared the intrusion at this moment of the religious emotion he saw dawning in her upturned face, as she looked at those tender palms, one day to be pierced for the sins of mankind, those little feet, held now in the mother's hand, but destined at last to tread the winepress alone.

Only the topmost piece remained unplaced. The one workman left within the chancel now made it fast, and the bit of real sky was banished forever

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by a sky of glass. He descended from the scaffold and went to join his comrades, who were fitting the wire screen over the window outside.

Josephine realised that she was alone with Berwyn, and turned to follow, but he restrained her gently. He did not kiss her at once, for he knew that she was frightened, but he pleaded with all his skill and charm.

"Why not to-day?" he asked her finally.
"Why not?"

"I don't know," she faltered rather piteously.

She glanced back at the window, and it seemed no longer to deter her, but rather, by its sweet humanity, to give a blessing. How foolish her fears were! The decision was made, but without a word. Josephine lifted her face in acquiescence to the demand of the man who had won her. Their lips met, and all considerations of wealth and position, all arguments, were forgotten. She was woman enough at that moment to be held by a complete delusion of their love.

CHAPTER XXI

THE UNPARDONABLE CRIME

ABOUT four o'clock on the following afternoon Josephine found herself walking up Fifth Avenue alone. A consciousness of dual personality oppressed her: one, belonging to yesterday, to the peace and security of the old house in the woods, to innocent adventure and romance, was striving for reconciliation with the other, which had left all this behind and fled away. She felt that she was irrevocably changed,—a change curiously symbolised by the snowfall of the night. This belated, mid-winter storm had spread a white pall over the world and sent a chill of depression through her heart.

And now she had no courage for the mission on which she was bent. In what words could she break the news to Mr. Uxbridge that his nephew was alive, and that she came as his wife? Berwyn had made it appear the most natural thing in the world that she should be the messenger, and so she had left him laughingly, after receiving his final instructions, proud of her extraordinary commission. It was such an errand as fell to the lot of few, even in the pages of fiction.

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In her reaction and panic it would have been a comfort to know that the architect was not at home, but his own voice had answered over the telephone. He was fortunate, he said, to be kept in the house by a slight attack of rheumatism, since it meant that he was to have the pleasure of a call from her. She told him that she had some special news to relate, and bade him good-bye until her arrival.

Now she regretted that she had not given him some hint of the secret. It would have made the beginning of the interview so much easier if she had merely said that she was married to the author of whom he had heard them speak, and that he had been right in supposing the name of Le Strange to be assumed. As yet the event was known only to her parents. She had written another letter home, saying that she was happy, but the conviction that her mother at least would believe it could not restore her spirits.

How had the veil of romance lifted, leaving life's grim realities exposed in harsh, relentless outline? What strange dejection and fear — nay, more, what sense of guilt — was this that fell upon her, as if suddenly a darkened glass were placed before her eyes, dimming the long vista of the street? The reaction was physical in its effect, so that she heard less distinctly the traffic of the city and the

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voices of those that passed. She drew her fur more closely about her, with a feeling that the air had grown colder, though the steady falling of the snow presaged no change.

Yesterday she had felt toward Mr. Uxbridge as a child might feel toward an old man who had petted and admired her; but it seemed that her relationship with him, too, was ruined, she knew not why. She was seized with resentment against Berwyn for sending her forth thus alone. It was such a short time since their marriage. She thought of him now more as a man in whose power she had placed herself than as her husband. In a sudden longing for freedom, she stood still. If she might only be at home once more, and never see him again! She glanced at her watch. It was possible to catch the train and be there in an hour. But she could not; she was ashamed. Her mother must not know that this romantic marriage was a ghastly mistake. She would not return till she had steeled herself to a duplicity that should last a lifetime.

Her mind gradually comprehended some words which she had been staring at unconsciously, — *The Church of the Heavenly Rest*, — placed before her, it seemed, in mockery of her mood. A small side door was ajar, and she entered, thinking of the lover she had rejected with such scorn. Henceforth he would have a strange revenge in these

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constant reminders of him, and in their tormenting claims. The inner doors fell softly to behind her, and she stood motionless, impressed by the beauty and seclusion of the place. Her gaze travelled down the aisle to the picture of Christ above the altar, his hands outstretched in an invitation to come and receive his gift of rest. It was as if the little child she had seen the day before had grown to manhood and become the Saviour of the world. She felt an impulse to say a prayer, and yielded furtively, sinking on her knees a moment in the nearest pew. No one was present to witness what she called her weakness. Nevertheless, as she hurried out into the street, she found that her mood was more hopeful.

Her thoughts turned toward Mr. Uxbridge with a new confidence. Even if his gift of the window to Cresson's church was a proof of nothing more than artistic interests and ideals, the monument erected to his nephew's memory was a proof of heart. Berwyn had instinctively made little of the cenotaph in his story, and she had not seen it, for a cemetery was a place she always avoided with shrinking. Why did she never till this moment appreciate the pathos of that memorial?

This insight gave her errand dignity, and forgetting herself somewhat in her concern for him, her pulse grew calmer. She found the street and

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number, and was surprised at her freedom from trepidation as she rang the bell.

Josephine had not imagined Mr. Uxbridge so rich, nor his house so grand. She was standing in a vestibule of variegated marble. There were figures in mosaic on either wall, and the glass door, crossed by latticed wrought iron, was flanked with pillars of Mexican onyx. A soft light fell from an antique lantern above her head. But if all this was beautiful, there was something forbidding about it too, —an oppressive suggestion of massiveness and entrenchment.

Once inside the mysterious door, she paused a moment before following the servant upstairs, and registered a new impression. She noted the suit of chain armour on the wall, and the drawing-room beyond. There the waning light from the windows disclosed the gilt streaks of heavy picture frames, a medley of wonderful chairs and tables, and two statuary groups in particular: one, a bronze boar torn down by pursuing hounds; another, a superb work in Pentelic marble, representing a youth borne on the shoulder of a siren, whose wide wings and floating hair were lifted above the waves. Her pause was also an impulse of postponement, and when she went on up the winding stairs, slipping her hand smoothly along the baluster, her heart beat rapidly, but not with the effort of ascent. The

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heavy curtains of a wide door fell behind her, and she stood in a large room directly over that into which she had just been gazing.

The resemblance between the two rooms was in size merely, for here only the apertures for doors and windows broke the lines of books. In this place the architect did much of his work. He sat now at a table in the centre, his strong features turned toward her in the light of the chandelier, which brought out also the white expanse of his waistcoat and the crimson carnation in his buttonhole. She was immediately aware of the faint, though pungent, odour of a Turkish cigarette lying beside a cup of black coffee at his elbow.

"My dear girl," he said, "come here and sit down beside me. I have a touch of sciatica which regulates my manners; but you will be lenient."

She did as she was bidden, and he took her hand, searching her face enquiringly with his restless eyes.

"You look charming in those furs; but then you always do. Upon my word, I feel better already for your presence. You bring the very breath of spring-time into this room."

Josephine was accustomed to his elaborate, old-fashioned compliments, and did not pay much attention to his phrases. But her intuitions had been marvellously quickened. She saw that he

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really loved her, and that she had nothing to fear from his love.

"Tell me what your news is," he resumed. "Nothing bad, I hope?"

"No," she returned quietly. "I'm married."

He looked at her as if she were a precocious and petted child, caught in an ingenious piece of mischief. It was the quick achievement of a well-schooled man, who would conceal his disappointment behind a specious gaiety.

"Goodness gracious!" he exclaimed. "You say it in such an offhand way that one might think it an ordinary occurrence. Married, indeed! It's a runaway match, of course, and you want me to help you straighten things out at home. Well, that depends. Tell me who the man is."

"You have heard his name, Mr. Uxbridge, — Philip Le Strange."

This half disclosure had suggested itself to her as a first step, and she realised with a sinking courage that the hardest part of her task was yet to come.

"Not that literary fellow!" he cried. "Not that penniless scribbler! Gad! I gave you credit for more sense."

"It's not as bad as you think," she protested. "I believe he is not actually penniless. In fact, he is a man of means."

"Though I understand he lives out there with

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young Cresson in a tenement. A likely story." Then his expression softened. He took her hand again, and patted it gently. "My dear girl, the fellow is probably an impostor, and has tricked you into this foolish business. You're not happy, — I can see that. You already regret it, and that's why you have come to me. Let us talk it over calmly, and see what can be done."

The scene was one which could have been reproduced on the stage with good effect, to every detail: the contrast in years and looks between the two who sat there in the strong central light; the spectators' knowledge of the tale she had to tell. And she told it with that histrionic instinct which was part of her, watchful and quiet, in spite of her inward excitement. The girl who had faced her father and lover so unexpectedly in the theatre was equal to her part now.

"I want to tell you something of his story, Mr. Uxbridge," she began, "because you are more concerned in it than merely as my friend. Philip Le Strange is not my husband's real name—"

"I might have guessed that," he interrupted. "I think I intimated as much when your mother told me about him. It has all the air of a pen name."

"It is," she assented; "and yet it is the name of an ancestor too, an architect who had something to do with building a cathedral in England."

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Josephine had intended to add fact to fact, until she could soften the final revelation by preparatory steps. The scene would be managed thus on the stage, and the playwright, if he knew his business, would see to it that the interlocutor was sufficiently dull. But Josephine had to deal with a remarkably quick-witted man. It was enough that he recalled his own remark upon the coincidence of the name. He saw the rest in the girl's face, and his own blanched. Still, the conviction that his nephew was dead had become a part of him, and was not to be sloughed in a moment.

"You're going to tell me that you've married George Berwyn, my nephew, who was drowned," he said harshly. "I tell you he's dead these two years. This is some rogue who knew him, who doubtless resembles him, and is trading on the likeness for money. Where is he?"

"He's not an impostor," she declared. "It's true!"

He started abruptly to his feet, with no consciousness of pain. Josephine rose also, trembling for the result; but she need not have feared. His next words were a shock and a revelation to her.

"What has George done now," he demanded, "that he should allow me to think him dead all this time, and then be afraid to come and tell me himself?"

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"Nothing!" she cried eagerly.

An impatient gesture escaped him. "I don't understand why you should conceal the truth from me, since you came here to tell it. If George has committed some crime, I'll stand by him." He walked quickly to the door and looked out between the curtains. "You are tormenting me by mistaken kindness," he told her, returning. He sat down again, calmly enough, and selected a cigarette from the box before him, as if to reassure her, though he put it down unlighted.

So Josephine told her story, and weak enough it seemed to her now. The whim — the *ennui* — the experiment, — all those reasons which had been so convincing when Berwyn gave them were mere vapours, names for a colossal insensibility and selfishness, whose effect she saw clearly in the tragic face of her listener. If her husband had only done some reckless deed, something savouring of the courage of a freebooter, he could have appealed to her imagination still. If there were any excuse at all for the suffering he had inflicted!

Mr. Uxbridge, sitting there motionless and attentive, began to win from her a new regard. She saw in him the man of strong affections and of achievement. Somehow she felt belittled, relegated with the man she had married to an inconsequential place. She seemed to share in the architect's un-

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spoken condemnation, and the reaction from her long self-control brought the tears to her eyes.

"Don't be so foolish as to cry," he said, with a kind of brusque concern.

"I'm not crying," she declared.

"Don't, if you want me to be civil to your husband; and I will be, for your sake. You've nothing to cry for, after all. You'll be well established, and not ill treated. George is always easy to get along with. Only, don't look for a heart where none exists. That was my mistake."

"I wish I were dead!" she exclaimed passionately.

"Don't wish anything so foolish," he protested. "You'll find the world a very decent sort of place, and life quite worth while, provided you learn to eliminate the inconvenience of a heart. Find consolation in the mind. You've got one — use it. That's what I do." He struck his fist upon the drawings before him, with an impulse of passion that belied the quiet bitterness of his tone. Then he fingered the telephone receiver on the table, and withdrew his hand, disclosing in his next words the plan he had thought of, only to reject.

"No, I can't see him to-day. Ask him to call on me to-morrow morning, alone. He will want an accounting of his property. Fortunately, it remains intact." A sudden gleam of humour lighted his

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eyes. "Fortunately for you, my dear. You've had a narrow escape. As I had no need of it myself, I was thinking of building a hospital. In fact, these were the tentative plans—quite my masterpiece."

When Josephine had left the house, she was glad to remember that he had kissed her at parting. More than words, this act was a promise of reconciliation with her husband. She did not doubt her ability to bring it about herself, and her heart was lighter. The architect's words had suggested anew the possibilities before her, and her eager mind leaped beyond these initial scenes and explanations. She would do a great deal for everybody, and be a great deal to everybody.

In this mood she ascended to her room in the hotel and threw open the door, but started back with a cry of surprise and fear. She must have made a mistake, for this could not be her husband who rose to greet her. It was n't, and yet it was. At least, it was his voice that checked her flight. Berwyn drew her in, and shut the door.

"Don't take on so, Josephine," he begged her, alarmed.

He was smooth-shaven once more; and well as he knew the ways of women, he was utterly unprepared for the effect of this transformation upon her. She could not have accounted for her own emotions. It was not only that she was in no condition

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to bear one thing more; it was the thing itself. Her marriage, stripped of its last shred of dignity, had suddenly become farcical and melodramatic.

"I would have told you," he argued, reasonably enough, "but I never thought of it till after you were gone. Of course I ought to appear now as I used to look. I scarcely realised that you had never seen me without that disguise. But tell me — how did you find him?"

Josephine could not do so at once. She laughed and cried, and would not let him come near her. Yet she was ashamed of her excitement, and said so, for she saw that she put a severe strain upon his courtesy and forbearance. At last she sat down and told him of the interview, his uncle's deep sense of wrong, the prospect of a reconciliation, even the narrow escape of his fortune.

But the break in her imagination between the old Berwyn and the new was complete. He seemed to have shrunk physically; a touch of the picturesque had gone. Though a bride of a day, she saw him very nearly as he would have appeared to a discerning stranger, — neat, almost undersized, with an impenetrable look in his steady eyes that promised hardness, and with no generous lines of mouth or chin. He was less an individual, and more a type with which her theatrical experience, short as it was, had made her familiar.

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The transformation supplemented his uncle's warning words, and was so far a revelation that a certain fear of him crept into her heart. She did not think of a possible breaking of the tie by which she had bound herself. Her pride left no room for such a hope. No one should know that, seeking liberty, she had fluttered into a cage at last. Sitting there so changed, with his cigarette, and the toddy by which he had nerved himself against her coming, he seemed not so much her husband as her confederate.

CHAPTER XXII

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LATE in the afternoon of the day following Josephine's disappearance from home, Cresson, taking a short cut through the grounds of the estate, came face to face with Judge Faile. He had started out unwillingly to make parochial calls, and was returning exhilarated, not only because conscious of a duty done, but also because he found refreshment from human intercourse. To one of his robust nature and imaginative temperament there was stimulation also in the breaking of the atmospheric calm. His spirits rose to meet the wind, and he was inclined to prolong his walk indefinitely for the mere pleasure of feeling the unaccustomed snow beating against his face.

"Do you often take a stroll about the grounds in the teeth of a northeaster?" he asked gaily.

He had scarcely spoken when he realised that somehow he had missed the mark. The judge's expression was blurred by the deepening gloom, but there was a dejection in his manner and a hesitation in his reply that boded evil tidings.

"I was just thinking of you, Cresson, as it

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chanced, perhaps illogically. I have had a great blow, — a great blow. My daughter has left us.”

Cresson’s heart stood still. For a moment it seemed to him that Josephine had died, and then an alternative, scarcely less terrible, flashed across his mind.

“What do you mean?” he demanded. “Gone — how?”

“She’s married to your friend Le Strange — Berwyn.”

“My friend!”

“Why did you bring him here, if he was n’t your friend?” the judge asked, noting the scorn in the other’s exclamation. “I supposed you knew something about him.”

“I knew nothing,” Cresson confessed, stricken by the accusation, “except the lies he told me.”

“He did n’t tell you that he was Uxbridge’s nephew, George Berwyn, the young scapegrace who was supposed to be drowned about two years ago?”

“I was a fool,” Cresson returned irrelevantly.

He said no more for some time, till the silence between them became oppressive, while the darkness deepened visibly. His chief emotion at the moment was one of humiliation at his own simplicity, and rage against the betrayer of his confidence. How the man must have laughed inwardly, listening

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to his confession of a double life! What sophistic counsel of duplicity Berwyn had given, himself a master in the art! The silence was illuminating to the judge. He divined how far matters had gone between Josephine and Cresson, at least as far as the latter was concerned.

"I will go with you to the bridge," he said finally. There was a delicate desire to show some sympathy by the offer, and his next words indicated more clearly how much he understood. "We shall have to face the facts now, Cresson, though I must confess that my wife's skill in giving them her own interpretation was what drove me from the house. Women are the great materialists; they always have an eye on the butler's pantry."

"Then the man is rich?" Cresson asked. He wondered bitterly whether Josephine really loved Berwyn, or had sold herself for the flesh-pots she had so often professed to care for.

"So I understand; and I am told that I ought to congratulate myself upon my son-in-law. His conduct is to be given euphemistic names, — picturesque, adventurous, and so forth."

During their short walk he continued to relieve his mind, but he found merely a listener in his companion. Cresson had taken the judge's own hint and faced the facts. He was an outsider now, the rejected lover; and there was dignity, as well as no

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little experience with life, in his silence. Still, he felt the need of saying something.

"I'm only a Job's comforter, Mr. Faile, you will think, but — but —"

"You stand in need of comfort yourself," the other interrupted impulsively. "You can't side with Mrs. Faile, and you won't side with me. I understand — I wish it had been different."

There was a curious reminder of Josephine in this that almost unmanned Cresson.

"Thank you, judge," he answered. "I appreciate that."

They shook hands without further words and parted. Cresson walked into the full force of the storm in the park, without much thought of his destination; but his disinclination to return to his rooms, associated as they were with the personality of Berwyn, became irresistible. More than that, he felt that he must flee the region altogether. If any parishioner should call upon him, if any church duty presented itself, he would be unable to respond. He craved utter loneliness for a little while, so that he might pull himself together, before he took up his staff once more and followed the straight and narrow path to the end.

In Cresson's college days the great city had been not merely his playground, the scene of his studies in the Ghetto, but a refuge and distraction in times

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of mental tumult. Whenever his temperamental problems became insoluble, he would drop his work and lose himself in the east side. There he satisfied the inexhaustible curiosity of one bred in the country, and he returned with his problems shelved, if not solved, replaced by new impressions, other subjects for thought.

It was the same blind impulse now that drove him on. He had outgrown the danger of dissipation and moral breakdown, but action he must have. He must not sit alone and harbour his hatred of his false friend, his judgment of Josephine, his self-pity. Dimly he felt that such emotions would destroy him, if he gave them room. He would run away from them, he would win weariness and sleep; and his waking would find his face set toward safety.

When Berwyn obeyed his uncle's summons, he found the architect seated at the table in his study, with documents relating to the estate spread out before him. The emotion of the previous day had left its trace on the older man's face; his sciatica was worse, and the usual nervousness of his manner was intensified. Yet their greeting was quiet enough. Berwyn found that he was to be kept at a distance. As far as outward demonstration went, he might have returned from one of his many trips abroad, some of which had equalled this last absence in length.

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The architect plunged at once into the business in hand : the stocks he had purchased, the rents he had collected, the repairs he had made. He gave his nephew some excellent advice also in regard to his property, which had appreciated somewhat in value under his care.

"You make a great mistake in letting things drift," he said. "You might be worth a great deal more in ten years from now, if you gave the matter proper thought and attention."

He tied up the papers and pushed them across the table.

"There they are. I've telephoned to your banker and your man of business. They're expecting you this morning. You'll have a great deal to attend to."

Berwyn was unwilling to accept such a dismissal, for he was by nature incapable of enduring a strained relationship.

"I have something to work for, now," he began lamely. He wished to be restored to the favour and indulgence he had abused, but his usual facility failed him. A realisation of his guilt left him almost tongue-tied. He fingered the documents uneasily, and his pale face flushed. "I wish you wouldn't turn me down so hard, uncle," he ventured.

If there was one thing Berwyn hated, it was such

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a scene as was now impending. Rather than thresh out the matter, he was tempted to go and return no more. To such an extent had he carried his gospel of pleasure that most of the deeper emotions of life were forbidden topics; and so great was his sensitive shrinking from realities that his chief feeling was resentment at the situation in which he found himself. But the storm he anticipated did not break.

"You may well say you have something to work for, now," his uncle answered. Suddenly his glance grew eager with the ambition which would never down, even for one who had so often disappointed his hopes. "Make Josephine proud of you," he urged. "You can hold her, if you try, and she is worth the effort. Don't take her for granted, as you take everything else, or you'll lose her, and with her the best influence that has ever come into your life. Those tales of Angeloro were excellent. Go ahead on that line. Save some of each day for writing. Don't fall into the old rut, and the old distractions."

"I won't," Berwyn promised.

He took his documents and left, relieved to get off so easily, but sore with a sense of opprobrium. His uncle had changed, and it made him uncomfortable to realise that he was now on probation. Only by achievement could he win back the old

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confidence and affection. The time of postponement was finally past, and the obligation put upon his shoulders irked him like a burden. However, he was not prone to dwell long on the moral aspect of a situation. The cab that carried him to his banker was taking him to pleasant experiences. There were no more censures to be encountered, but surprises, laughter, jests, congratulations, a welcome. And before him lay all the holiday of his honeymoon.

The morning justified his anticipations. He ran across a number of his friends ; he gave the reporters a good interview, with something of a fellow feeling for brothers of the guild ; and when he returned to the hotel, he found Josephine in good spirits. She had spent the time shopping, and a wonderful array of purchases was scattered about the room. Berwyn was charming in his appreciation ; he complimented her upon her taste ; and finally he declared that the time had come for them to celebrate. After luncheon they would go down and look through the old house, and end the day in some Bohemian resort, as chance might decide.

The morning had given promise of clearing weather, but now the winter returned in good earnest. Again the whirling snowflakes obscured the street, whitening the hats of those who passed

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the window where they sat at table. Josephine found the change welcome, the glamour of the city enhanced. In the reaction from yesterday's uncertainty and depression, her mood soared until it seemed that life might be what she had dreamed. It was all sufficiently new and fascinating to her, — the splendour of the hotel, the obsequious service, the shaded candles, the orchestra, the sense of security and wealth and freedom from care. This was the life she had seen hitherto only from the outside. She was once one who passed by and glanced in, to whom a cab was a luxury, and the Third Avenue Elevated a familiar thoroughfare. Berwyn was the magician who had opened the door, and she was grateful to him, almost as a child might have been. A thought of Cresson did cross her mind, like a shadow. She wished his happiness, too, and hoped he would not take her loss tragically. But this was a flitting mood. He seemed very far away now, and she argued that she had doubtless overestimated his love for her. Yet, with feminine inconsistency, she would not have him forget her. She was young enough to assume an absolute break with the past. Experience had not taught her that death is the only sure severer in the criss-cross journeyings of this life. As Berwyn diverted her with an account of his interview with his uncle and his subsequent encounters, the figure of her

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rejected lover faded away like a poor ghost, to trouble her no more.

Even the electric cab in which they started forth was an interesting novelty, and she settled back comfortably, looking at her husband with shining eyes.

"George," she said, "I do so appreciate nice things and how good you are to me."

She felt better for having made the acknowledgment, as if she had somehow recompensed him for that thought of Cresson. And Berwyn was tenderly amused by her praise, for, whatever his faults, meanness in money matters was not one of them. But his lightness of mood was only on the surface now. As they drew nearer his old home, he recalled a fact he had learned from his man of business; but he would not shadow his wife's first entrance into his house by telling her that the servant he left in charge had died there. With characteristic subtlety, that subterranean mental life into which he dropped so quickly, he dwelt upon this fact with something of superstitious uneasiness. It was as if his wife must stumble on the threshold, the evil omen of the *titubatio pedis*; and he could do nothing to prevent the disaster.

They gained an entrance through the area way, and climbed the stairs, passing from room to room. Berwyn threw up the curtains, showing in the snow-pale light the old family portraits and pieces of

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furniture, each with its history and associations. Josephine had anticipated this experience eagerly, and had begun it gaily, but gradually the spirit of the place pervaded her with a chill. She must have known that it would be like this, — no fire in the furnace, no cheer, — there had not been time for such preparations. But this was not all. Berwyn himself seemed strangely altered. He was very gentle with her; he smiled indulgently at some of her questions and plans; but she divined for the first time that estranging sadness which came upon him at intervals like a spiritual disease. It was not ordinary memory of the past, nor softening grief; it was pitiless negation, fatalistic acquiescence in the extinction of all things. Her youth and beauty were moth-like to his imagination. Alive to-day, the warm blood pulsing in her transparent cheek, and so soon to be a ghost, like the many others that haunted those rooms.

Always volatile in her moods, and keen in her intuitions, she read his gray face and distant gaze till she mastered the meaning; but how could she comfort him? How could she throw herself into his arms, and cry a little, and tell him that she understood his thoughts, but that life was all before them, and love was sweet, and that there was another, better existence beyond the grave? What reaction would have come from such abandon, what

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cheerfulness and laughter, born of tears! But Josephine did not try the experiment, for somehow she knew that she would dash herself against his courteous impassivity in vain. He would be distressed, and she would be made to feel that she was foolish and hysterical. Had she loved him, she would have been her true, impulsive self; but the moment passed, and it struck the keynote of their life together.

She was glad to return to the warmth of the kitchen below, and to drink the cup of tea which the caretaker prepared; more pleased to escape from the house entirely. With dinner her spirits revived. She argued that the reaction had been due to sheer weariness, and to the strangeness of these adventures. It would be forgotten, like a sad dream; and there was the theatre to come, and a final incursion into that fascinating Bohemia of which Berwyn had told her.

The resort called The Little Gypsy was one of those places into which the genuine Bohemia had moved, driven from other haunts by industrious sightseers from Philistia, and Berwyn had discovered it since his return. He had gone to the old places to find the old machinery in motion,—the same picturesquely clad musicians, the same odd, inverted bottles and unintelligible *menus*, but Italian airs instead of Hungarian, and an audience

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of dupes. These people were for the most part Americans, quite respectable and often hard-working, who had fallen into the New York delusion of mistaking eating and drinking for pleasure. They had grown a little stout, and a little hard, and somewhat rubicund ; they looked at each other through the drifting clouds of tobacco smoke, suspecting a Bohemian in every stranger, and wondering why no one danced on the table for their diversion ; but the artistic Hippocleides was doing this feat elsewhere to divert himself. It was to The Little Gypsy that Berwyn took Josephine, when the play was over.

She was far from guessing the nature of his experiment, or how he watched the effect upon her untrained senses of this new world. It was as unknown to her as to any country girl, though she had lived all her life within the limits of the city. Seen through the windows of the cab, it grew every moment more phantasmagoric and alluring. She was lost in a maze of streets, filled with people even in this inclement weather, every face foreign, every sign above the interminable shops a riddle. Hebrew, German, Hungarian, Italian, — there was any language, it seemed, but English. They got out at last in a dark alley, passed through a narrow door, and into a long, low room, where the atmosphere was like a fog and the clatter was deafening.

“I never saw such queer people in my life,” she

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told him, standing at gaze, as if she might turn and retreat.

"That's why I brought you here," he answered, smiling at her bewilderment.

He selected an advantageous position for her, and during their dinner she studied the company with a puckered brow, and with comments that gave him an entertainment she did not guess. He had not thought her quite so provincial; he was surprised that her theatrical experience had left her so sweet and unenlightened. Absorbed as she was in registering impressions, she failed to notice that he was drinking steadily; and the indulgence seemed to have no other effect upon him than to increase his sense of humour.

"My dear child," he said, "you ask me whether women who smoke cigarettes and wear their hair in that fashion can be nice. If by nice you mean good, I can only say that I'm afraid they are rather weak in theology. I don't suppose they would qualify as teachers in Cresson's Sunday-school."

Down at the other end of the room, concealed from their view by an intervening pillar, Cresson himself was sitting at this moment, talking with the leader of the little orchestra.

"I thought I recognised you, Janos," he said. "You used to be at the Tivoli, didn't you? How many years ago was that?"

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"Five years; but where have you been keeping yourself all this time?"

"Various places," Cresson answered; "and I have less opportunity for recreation than in my student days. I've entered the church since then."

"Ah," Janos commented, unsurprised; "then you have forgotten your violin, I suppose. You used to take a hand with me, I remember. I thought you would have been a musician."

"I remember," Cresson assented wistfully. "Those were great days, when one obeyed his impulses. But I could do it again, and will. Lend me your instrument, — I have n't forgotten how to play it."

The musician was glad to become a listener, and the proposal stirred a little ripple of comment and approval among the nearer diners. Josephine, her eyes on her husband's face, was struck by a sudden change in his expression, and followed the direction of his gaze. Standing by the piano she saw the man whose name had come so impishly to Berwyn's lips, looking at her with strange, compelling power. For a moment the blood changed to quicksilver in her veins. The reality of the vision was beyond belief. After the first sharp, physical tumult of discovery, she experienced a panic desire to get away. There was a sense of guilt, too. It revealed her confidence

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in Cresson that she did not question the propriety of his presence in that place; she only feared he might question the propriety of hers.

Whether he had been sitting there all this time, or whether he had passed her chair unnoticed, she could only guess; but she divined that he had seen her first, for his look showed no surprise. Josephine was mistaken, though surprise was perhaps too weak a word to describe the emotion that held him rigid. His physical immobility was nothing else than a trick of his English inheritance; within, his heart was on fire. Suddenly, as if he had made a decision, he lifted the violin and began to tune it to a note of the piano. His eyes left hers, and he turned to speak to his accompanist. A wave of interest swept across the room, a divination of something exceptional about to happen. Cresson threw back his head and smiled with a curious touch of arrogance and determination, adjusted the instrument against his throat, and ran the bow lightly over the strings.

Berwyn recovered from his stupefaction. "Speak of the devil," he murmured, chuckling, "and he's sure to appear. What do you make of that? The wandering Jew, by Gad! Another dual life, and another scandal for the Church. But I did n't think it. This discovery will destroy my faith in human nature. I thought I knew something of men, but I don't. I should n't be surprised after this if my

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uncle joined the Salvation Army and banged a tambourine on the street corners."

Josephine looked at him, and even in his malicious, wine-engendered mirth, he felt her scorn.

"Listen," she commanded, her face flushed with excitement, "he's going to play."

"Why, of course he can play," Berwyn retorted. "If he would only shake the Englishman in him and give the Jew full swing, — if he would only abandon that church hobby of his and turn fiddler in good earnest, he'd make a name for himself."

He lighted another cigarette and settled himself to listen, a cynical smile twitching the corners of his lips.

Josephine had scarcely heard him out, and now she almost forgot his presence. Her face was white and drawn, her sweet mouth half open in a kind of agony of listening, her wide eyes held by those of the man she had rejected. A hush was falling upon the room. A woman near by let her head sink on her companion's shoulder. Faces grew abstracted with vague homesickness and longing. It was a scene for the brush of an artist: the various attitudes of rapt attention; malign records vanishing in the glow of inner illumination; and the strong figure of the musician above, swaying his hearers as he swayed himself, by the magic of his bow.

Crésson was conscious of his power. One might

call him vain, full of mannerisms, what you will; but he would be compelled to add that he played with the interpretation of a genius. Poor Josephine! Had he ever told her that he possessed this stupendous talent; had he ever played for her like that, she would have followed him to the end of the world. She loved the good things of this life, but she loved genius more; and music was her despair. She thought of her foolish whistling, and her face burned with shame. What must have been his scorn when he heard her! But it was of his love that he told her now. She saw it all at last: his wistful groping for repentance, when it was too late; the fury of his jealousy; the final triumph of his hope, an eerie hope, and not of this world. She shivered slightly as the notes rose, one above the other, until it seemed that they could rise no higher. Last of all came just a breath, dying away like a sigh that is lost somewhere in the sunset sky. It was vision and sound in one.

Cresson's eyes fell from hers, and the bow dropped to his side. In the deafening applause that followed, she sat motionless. She dared not look at the man who was her husband, for she knew that her look would betray her. And yet, what did it matter now? She was sure that his discerning gaze was upon her, and that he read her secret in the very pulses of her cheek.

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But Cresson was playing again. Though Josephine had not recognised his first piece, she knew Gounod's *Ave Maria*. She had often whistled it softly to herself when alone. Now it was to be forever associated in her mind with the window of the Virgin and the Child in the church that Cresson had built. The emotion with which she had seen it first was the cause of her fatal decision, her inexplicable yielding.

Ave Maria, ora pro nobis peccatoribus !

The inarticulate strings of the violin sang the prayer as clearly as any words. It was characteristic of the contradictions in Cresson's nature that he would have scouted a prayer to the Virgin in his reasonable moments as a base superstition ; but the artist in him seized upon the work of art, regardless of such considerations, to make it voice his mood. As for Josephine, she listened with smarting eyes, thinking how much more relentlessly mistakes are punished in this mysterious world than sins.

Cresson would not play again. He restored the instrument he had borrowed, and sank heavily into his chair, for the storm of passion had left him stranded. The cries of *encore* died away into something like the respectful acquiescence of an audience at a concert in the weariness of a great artist. The room assumed its normal aspect, and presently the orchestra returned to its interrupted programme.

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Berwyn commented justly upon the incident, perhaps shamed from his sarcasm by sheer achievement. He described his first night in Cresson's apartments, when he had fallen asleep to the sound of his violin. Josephine, glancing furtively at the head that would not turn again, listened eagerly, scarcely surprised at the change in Berwyn's manner. She rested on his training, and hardly gave him the credit he deserved for acting, at least, the part of magnanimity. He did not hurry their departure, as if he would intimate a willingness to meet his old rival again, should he pass them by. But Cresson was obdurate, and they were the first to leave.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

THREE months had passed, and the old house on Fifth Avenue was still strange to Josephine. She felt more like a guest there than its mistress. She was often haunted by the eyes of the family portraits that followed her movements wherever she went, and the antique clock at the foot of the gradual stairway chimed the quarter hours with a hint of solemnity. The architect's house pleased her better, for there everything was art, while here all was history. It was the difference between the habitat of the artist and that of the antiquarian. Everything spoke of four generations of Berwyns and their tastes. The tastes of her own ancestors had been similar, but she had lived more in the woods than in her father's house. Now the walls shut her in with portraits that looked at her askance, as if, from some comfortless abode in the spirit world, they grudged her the possession of beauty and youth.

One evening, early in April, she felt this uncongenial atmosphere with peculiar force. She had just returned from a day in the Bronx, and the murmur of the wind in the trees of the old estate still filled

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her ears like a song of freedom. She would have been glad to dine alone in her room. A chill of apprehension weighed upon her spirits, and she owned her disappointment that she had not caught even a glimpse of Cresson. But when she came down to the table, Berwyn seemed glad to see her back, and she felt a twinge of conscience.

"You look as if you had enjoyed yourself," he told her, "and I like the way you have arranged your hair. Did you get all that color in the Bronx?"

"Not all," she confessed, lifting one hand to adjust a comb, instinctively responsive to appreciation. "Part of it comes from excitement. You know I've got to do my little turn to-night for the benefit of the Seamen's Institute."

"I had forgotten," he said. "What is it?"

"I'm going to imitate the wood thrush, for one thing. It's a beautiful song, like a flute. I wandered all over the place to find a thrush to-day and take another lesson. You ought to see the costume I'm going to wear — olive-green and white."

"Why don't you dress the part, as they say — brown, is n't it?"

"Because green is more becoming to me," she answered.

"Are you really nervous, Josephine?" he asked curiously.

"I am — absurdly nervous."

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"You may well say absurdly, for nothing could be more absurd. You've done the thing a hundred times."

"Yes; but it's much easier in the theatre, don't you think?"

"Frankly, I don't. In the theatre you are pitted against expert entertainers, and judged on your merits; but in this performance for sweet charity you'll be associated with a lot of awkward amateurs. What are they going to do, anyhow? Pose as allegorical figures of the seasons?"

She told him it was a play in three acts, with her part as an interlude between the first two. He put on his glasses and glanced over the programme she handed him, commenting dryly upon the different actors, till she began to laugh. Whether with intention or not, his witticisms were the greatest kindness to her, and restored her equanimity.

"You're going with me, are n't you, George?" she asked him.

"I meant to, when I surrendered fifty for those two tickets, but a confoundedly unlucky thing has happened. A friend of mine, one of the fellows I studied with in Rome, has taken it into his head to get married, and to-night he gives his last blow-out before becoming a benedict. I can't give him the go-by, even if he is such a fool as to marry the daughter of a restaurateur. She's a pretty little

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Italian girl, who will be fat and ugly by the time she is forty."

"You've been very kind to me, George," she said, with quiet sarcasm, a weapon borrowed unconsciously from his own armoury. "You've persuaded a number of old ladies to call, and as they got me into this, you're bound to see me through. You can't get me off your conscience so easily. I thought brides were sometimes accompanied by their husbands, even in New York."

"I supposed you were interested in church work," he protested, smiling. "However, if you will let me slip out when your part is done — "

She had won her point, but at the expense of her pride, and the victory gave her no satisfaction. Presently he began to tell her of a wonderful archaeological find in the Ægean Sea, a cargo of Greek deities, submerged for a thousand years beneath the waves, prisoned in a ship that was wrecked on its way to Rome, and discovered by peasants who were diving for sponges along the coast.

"The marbles have been mutilated beyond recognition, of course," he said, "but there are some wonderful bronzes, among them a statue of Hermes, or perhaps of Paris, which has been restored as good as new. The Athenian government won't let it leave the country."

He showed her a magazine which he had brought

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to the table, containing illustrations of the treasures. At another time she would have been more appreciative, but her impending trial, and the reluctance with which he had shared her interests, made her less open to his appeal.

"We must run over to Athens to see them," he suggested.

She scarcely realised all that the suggestion meant; the journey seemed long, the object inadequate, and she went upstairs to dress, more absorbed in the immediate evening, leaving him with his liqueur and cigarette, still intent upon the article in the magazine.

His interest in ancient things was somewhat depressing to her. It was also a revelation. She knew that he had severed his connection with the newspaper entirely, and was writing no more stories. That diversion had palled upon him already. He spoke cynically of it, and viewed his one attempt at achievement from the perspective of buried cities. It was during his short illusion, when he followed the bubble reputation with hopefulness, that she first met him, and that illusion had made him winning. Now that it had died out, it left him hiding behind a masque of courtesy, secretly scornful of the ideals he had failed to attain. And, like an ancient Greek, he looked for inspiration in the society of some unfettered Aspasia. The marriage

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which would have stimulated a man of unspoiled feeling dulled him by its unadventurous security.

As they drove to the scene of the entertainment, there was the comparative silence of divided interests between them, and Josephine felt abandoned; nevertheless, when the carriage drew up before their destination, she appreciated the extent of her compensations. If she had sold her birthright for a mess of red pottage, the dish was not without its flavour.

There was intoxication in the splendid vista of Fifth Avenue that warm April night, in being part of the long procession of carriages, in the ascent beneath the awning into the brilliant house, where she was not only a welcome guest, but also a centre of curiosity and interest, where she meant to charm by her talent and beauty. Her misgivings vanished the moment she set foot upon this stage. With the instinct of a born actress, she learned in minutes what others had acquired by long habit and association. Her advent into this world was like an illustration of Plato's doctrine of Recollection. She remembered what her ancestors had known, as if from some previous incarnation.

Their hostess rallied Berwyn gently. "This is a most delightful sea change, — the devoted husband. I hope it will last."

"How can it fail to last?" he answered, with a

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charming smile. "The siren has drawn me ashore to stay."

Josephine forgot for the moment how easily he could say such things, and left him with a warm little glance of gratitude.

A temporary stage had been erected at one end of the great ball-room, and she was shown into a smaller apartment beyond, where the entertainers were preparing for their parts. Some of the women she already knew, but after the first greetings, she felt a comparative stranger among them. It was not only that she was to take no part in the play and lacked the common association of rehearsals with them; her instinct told her that there was a pervading consciousness of the vaudeville actress whom George Berwyn had married, and a subtle resentment at his choice.

She took a seat presently in one corner, a lovely picture; her fresh young face shaded by the large plumed hat she was to wear before the footlights, the opera cloak slipping down from her shoulders, disclosing a glimpse of the exquisite gown of green silk beneath, and her white, slender throat, against which glimmered a double string of pearls.

Unconsciously she pulled up her long gloves from time to time, but otherwise she sat very still, absorbed in the scene. There was considerable jesting with the men who were dressing on the other side

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of the room, and the dividing curtain swayed occasionally, as a wag threatened to break through to see that his wife's rouge was properly applied.

"My rôle makes me out villain enough, as it is," he remarked. "I'll not have her looking pale."

The girl who was to play the part turned to Josephine, as by inspiration. "How do you do it, Mrs. Berwyn? You ought to be able to give us points."

Josephine came forward, without a hint in her manner that she understood the spirit of the request. Her sweetness was disarming, though this was a harder part to play than the one to come. Meanwhile, it served to distract her thoughts from the ball-room beyond, and from the murmurs of that waiting audience, which impressed her imagination much as the crowded amphitheatre must have impressed a Roman gladiator who stood behind the bars that hid him from the lion.

But she needed to have no fear of her reception before the footlights. There was a liberal sprinkling of men present who had seen her in the theatre, and when she came out, they welcomed the favourite with an enthusiasm which lost none of its emphasis because of a knowledge that it was scarcely shared by the women. Her self-possession was perfect, and none could have guessed her recent panic. At the last moment her instinct for effect had caused her

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to retain her long cloak, flowing open at the front, as if she were wandering through the woods, listening to the songs of the birds and answering as the whim seized her. The men looked at each other and nodded their approval; and when she had passed behind the scenes, they were vociferous in their applause. The wood thrush was not enough; they would have every song she knew. Josephine returned, and gave the robin, the song sparrow, the yellow warbler, and the red-eyed vireo. Then she disappeared, with a bright smile of comradeship. She held her art lightly now, and had no desire to please too well. Without waiting for the comments of her fellow entertainers, she came down through the hall and slipped into a seat beside her husband, near the door.

She had seen his dark, smooth head and square, clean-shaven face from her vantage-ground on the stage, and wondered whether she pleased him as much as she used to, whether this incident might revive the old attraction, the sense of rivalry, and the desire to get her away from others. But with Berwyn the stimulation of the chase was gone. While other men turned to look at her, and she felt their suppressed excitement, he was merely courteous in his appreciation. There was no return of the former eagerness, for this was not the Josephine who had once so stirred his blood. He had no taste for the

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touching little dignity of wifehood which had rested upon her that evening with peculiar grace. She was chagrined at the promptness with which he accepted his release, when she reminded him that he had kept his promise.

"But you are not to take Mrs. Berwyn with you," protested the man who sat nearest and who had just demanded an introduction.

"I would n't be so cruel," Berwyn replied. "Besides, I could n't, very well. I'm going to Raynor's bachelor blow-out. You remember Raynor."

Later in the evening she caught sight of Uxbridge's striking face in the crowd, and, wearied of compliments and attention, she made her way to him eagerly, resolved that he should take her home.

"I'm sorry I missed your act," he said, looking at her warmly, "but I could n't get here in time."

"Oh, it was sufficiently silly," she answered, with a hint of bitterness.

He rallied her for her modesty, but his look was searching, and her eyes fell.

"You have n't been taking lessons in cynicism from your husband, I hope, my dear child? Where is he? I mean to call him to account."

"He left some time ago, to attend a bachelor dinner."

The architect's face darkened. "I want to talk

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with you about George," he confided, glancing about for a way of escape.

"Then suppose you take me home," she suggested. "I've had enough of glory for one night."

In the carriage he turned upon her with the question: "Is George writing any, these days? He promised me he would."

"You make me feel guilty when you ask me in that way," she answered, "as if you expected me to keep him up to the mark. No — he is n't writing any more. He despises it. He says that when he considers the millions of men who lived and died in ancient Nippur and Athens and Crete, and all their ambitions, he feels that they gave themselves a lot of unnecessary trouble to win fame, since nobody remembers the greatest of them now."

This synopsis of Berwyn's characteristic philosophy appealed to the architect's sense of humour, and he laughed in spite of his concern. But his gloom returned almost at once.

"I thought you would do something with that boy, but I see that he has fallen back into his old ways. Not that the fault is yours, my dear. Don't imagine for a moment that I believe an angel out of heaven could save him. He promised me to continue his literary work, but it's late in the day to hold him to good resolves, and I was a fool to cherish a final hope. I know what he's doing now:

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he's playing poker and drinking more than is good for him. If he keeps on in this way, you'll be a widow before long."

"Don't!" she protested sharply.

"I won't, then," he answered, with contrition; "but my unhappiness made a brute of me. I forgot that you might love him. Do you?"

"Presumably; but was that a fair question?"

"It hurts me to see you so bitter," he said. "Don't give him up yet, though I can't say he deserves anything better. Things may adjust themselves in time; they often do. Meanwhile, there are many interests—I heard you scored a triumph to-night."

"Oh, that!" she exclaimed contemptuously.

"Why not, among other things?"

"Because it is perfectly vapid. I shan't do it again."

He was disappointed by her evident indifference to her success, but a second thought cheered him. If it was due to her husband's treatment, it showed her love. With that assured, all might yet be well with them. Thus he argued shrewdly, in accordance with his wishes; but Josephine was thinking at the moment of Cresson's violin, and comparing her art with his.

Uxbridge begged permission to light a cigar, and then turned to her with a new question.

"The entertainment to-night was for a church

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charity, was it not? Have you any interest in church work, as such?"

"I think not," she answered. "Why do you ask?"

"Because I hoped you had. Life is apt to have an element of barrenness in it, if one has no religious appreciations. I don't like the negation of scepticism. You see what it has brought George to."

"I had n't expected such a sentiment from you, Mr. Uxbridge," she said.

"I had n't expected it from myself; but that's my little secret. I don't want to puff up my orthodox friends too much by seeming to come into camp after all these years. But religion gives an atmosphere to life, and an element of ideality, that atones for the grimness of the general situation in which we find ourselves. I am a good deal more respectful to it than I used to be."

He was delighted that she greeted this confession with a ripple of genuine laughter.

"I see you want me to convert my husband to the Church," she accused him. "But, even assuming that I was sufficiently religious myself, he is far too clever for me."

He stood with her a moment in front of her house, looking up and down the deserted thoroughfare, his face seamed and thoughtful, but the eyes bright and indomitable with the will to live.

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“How quiet it is down here at midnight now,” he mused. “It was n’t so in my youth. And what a night to be young in ! I love the very smell of the dust of this old street.”

He waited until the sleepy butler had unlocked the door, and then bade her good-night. She saw him climb back into the carriage, and the red end of his cigar described a circle of fire with the final wave of his hand. As she passed Berwyn’s room, she glanced in. The light was turned low, and the bed unoccupied. She thought of Mr. Uxbridge with a curious, new regret and sympathy. If he were only as young as his heart, or if her husband, being young, could only have his uncle’s nature ! Could the latter miracle happen, she felt that she would be happy.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SECOND WARNING

FOR a week the rain had descended, with only a few hours of intermission now and then, false gleams of promise to an impatient world ; but one morning Cresson awoke to a dead stillness, the absence of wind in the shutters and of showers against the roof. It was yet early morning, though the sun was already two hours above the horizon, when he sat down to breakfast and observed the changes disclosed by the clearing of the storm.

He could see at last the full extent of the lake which had gradually been spreading over the lowlands of the park. The little river had disappeared, though its general direction was still indicated by a line of *débris*, broken branches for the most part, which gave an odd impression, as they turned in the current, of drowning things throwing up despairing arms. On the east, the yellow water crept up through the woods to the steps of the Faile mansion, where it registered the highest mark in many years before beginning its almost imperceptible recession ; on the west, the railroad embankment served the purpose of a dike against its further progress.

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To Cresson the scene was one of peculiar refreshment, accustomed as his youth had been to the arid wastes of the far West. And yet there was a likeness, too. Just so, at the rainy season, the world had burst into colour : there the yellow poppy, and here the dandelion ; there the purple wistaria, here the lilac ; there the golden acanthus blossom, here the forsythia. At the foot of the hill, below the church, he saw that the apple trees, standing knee-deep, as it were, in water, had grown white with blossoms. The light breeze that entered his window brought a mingled fragrance. He longed to arrest the day indefinitely at this point, with the last mists just vanishing from the surface of the flood, with the sky still moist, and penetrating, like a fine blue powder, the network of thin branches on the hill.

He was very near to happiness of a quiet sort. It seemed a far call from this rare morning to that winter night when the loss of Josephine Faile had driven him to the city. He recalled their dramatic meeting in *The Little Gypsy*, and the incident seemed like an interview between them in which her husband had borne no part. Was there any sorrow, he wondered, for which time and one's work in life would not bring some measure of consolation ? There stood his finished church. It surpassed his expectation. The exaltation of the Easter

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service still lingered warmly in his memory. It had been one of his great days, the milestone beyond which the road lay straight and plain to success, should he continue the course begun. But he must leave it now, for the time had come.

The bell in the church tower began to ring, and he counted the strokes. It was eight o'clock, and he had passed an hour in dreaming. One would wish to pass such a day in no other manner. Nature seemed to rebuke man's hurry by her loveliness, and Cresson drifted on into a constructive reverie. Suppose his decision had not been made; suppose he assumed his right to delay his mission to the Jews until this entire work were finished; when might that time be? There was the parish house still to be built, and the rectory. That would take five years at the least, ten at the most. The last part of the work would be slower than the first. The bishop had purchased the land, and had induced rich men to contribute liberally toward the building of the church. Now he had a right to anticipate results. The congregation must complete the plan, in great part, and must become self-supporting.

It seemed the logical thing that the man who had put his hand to the plough should be the one to follow the furrow to the end. The argument was plausible, and Cresson weighed it guiltily. Yet

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all the time he knew that this mission to the Jews was his own peculiar duty, because of the blood in his veins, because of his knowledge of their language and ways of thought, and finally because of God's direct call to the work. Every day of postponement now was a day of disobedience, however he might try to obscure the fact by sophistry. There in the Ghetto were hundreds of thousands of his own people sitting in darkness, bound by the chains of a dead legalism. Was he to give them only the remnant of his life, after spending his youth and strength upon this easier task?

A shiver passed over him at the thought that God might cut him off from among the living, angered by his delay. But still he yielded a little longer to his dreams, as one turns again to his pillow when the time has come to be up and doing.

If respite were allowed him, what should he do next? He had wilfully begun his task at the wrong end. He had built the church first, and he knew that he should have built the parish house. There was no equipment for the social life his people needed. But his idealism had carried the day, and his arrogant ambition had caused him to aim at the brilliant and beautiful thing first. If he relinquished his work now, his successor would almost inevitably meet the need of a parish house as soon as possible by erecting a wooden building, a mere

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shed, which would detract from the beauty of the church and set the stamp of cheapness upon the whole. Another man would never have the patience to finish the plan as it had been begun.

Stone work was no mere preference with Cresson ; it was his passion. It was the only material that seemed honest, worthy of God's house, and permanent. For this reason the thought of leaving was peculiarly hard, the temptation to remain almost irresistible. He remained in fancy, while the hour slipped away, visualising every detail of the work as he would have it done. And since he had given himself over to thoughts of the forbidden, he allowed Josephine to enter them also.

The bell in the tower struck nine, but the sound had lost all power of admonition. At last there came a sharp knock at the door, and he turned, startled, to see his landlady standing before him.

"Don't tell me this is sweeping day, Mrs. Peach," he protested, observing the broom in her hand, and the turban with which she had enveloped her head. Then his eyes became accustomed to the comparative obscurity within, and he saw that her face was tragic. "What's the matter?" he demanded, uneasily. "Has anything happened?"

"Mr. Cresson," she said, "did you know that two men have just been killed on the new house above here?"

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"Killed!" he echoed, aghast. "How did it happen?"

"They fell from the scaffold while painting. The ambulance is there now. I hear they're both going to die, if they're not dead already. I thought you ought to know, being a clergyman."

Cresson rose to his feet, bewildered. He had visited the sick and prayed with the dying, but they were his own people, and were in a measure forewarned of their impending trial. This was the first time in his ministry that such a call had come to him, and it found him unprepared. He reached for his Prayer Book, conscious of the futility of such help, yet groping for support. There would be no time to read from a book. If they could yet hear and understand, he had only to tell them that Christ was their Saviour and would uphold them in the hour of death.

But the experience that awaited him was strangely unlike the one he had anticipated. The ambulance surgeon had finished his work by the time he shouldered his way into the crowd. One of the wounded men was already lying on the cot, and Cresson, looking in, saw that his face had taken on the hue of death. The crowd parted, and the second man was brought up to be laid beside his comrade. His features were swathed with bandages to the lips, and only a low moan of agony told that life still

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lingered, though consciousness had fled. Cresson spoke to the young surgeon, who stood now with one foot on the step, about to give the signal to start.

“Is there anything I can do for these men, doctor?”

The other looked at him in surprise.

“I am a clergyman,” Cresson added. He had never before felt the practical value of the clerical garb; but here he was, an officer of the Church, on duty without a uniform, with no outward sign of allegiance to the Christian faith which men might recognise.

“You can do nothing,” the surgeon answered, in a business-like manner. “One of them is dead, and the other probably will not live till we get him on the operating-table. As bad luck would have it, they fell on a pile of stone.”

The ambulance drove away, and the crowd began to dwindle. A few remained: the other workmen, who had as yet no heart to return to their duty, an officer, and the contractor. The last, an Irishman, was pointing to the scaffold, which still hung by one end, swaying against the side of the house, and explaining to the officer that the accident was caused by the carelessness of the painters themselves. His tone gave the impression of indignation and a sense of injury.

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"How did I know they could n't tie a rope right?" he demanded. "When a man asks for a job as painter, he's supposed to be able to rig a scaffold. You can see for yourself the rope ain't broken. There's no case of damages against me."

The contention was apparently just, for the rope hung to its full length from the davit.

"Who were they?" Cresson asked.

"Greenhorns," the contractor answered. "Only a couple of Jews, who came along here yesterday and struck me for a job. I supposed they understood their business."

"I did n't know that Jews were doing this kind of work," Cresson commented.

"They're doing any kind of work now-a-days. It's terrible. What with the Ginnies and the Hebrews pouring into this country, there won't be any room left for a white man soon."

Cresson divined the race antipathy which underlay this appalling callousness. Only a couple of Jews, intruders, and, above all, beyond the Christian pale! His eye fell upon a crimson spot at his feet, and he turned faint, not so much from physical horror as because he felt that the blood of these men was upon him. He returned to his room, to find Mrs. Peach eager to hear the details of the tragedy. She was sympathetic, even distressed, but he detected the relief in her voice:—

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"It is n't as bad as if they had been Christians."

"They were men for whom Christ died," he said, turning on her in a kind of fury. "'For the Jew first, and then for the Gentile.' What do you mean by saying it is n't as bad as if they had been Christians? It's worse, — infinitely worse, because they died without a knowledge of their Saviour. And the fault is ours. We've despised and persecuted them —"

"But the Jews killed Christ," she persisted stubbornly.

"It's a lie stated in that way," he retorted. "That was only a small faction, stirred up by the Pharisees. Who were the first converts? Who were the first saints and apostles and martyrs? And what was Jesus himself?"

He was arrested by the amazement in her face.

"Leave me alone," he went on, more calmly. "You don't understand. Your mind is sealed against the truth by the inherited prejudices of a thousand years. And I was railing at myself."

He closed the door behind her, and took his chair once more at the open window. The pathos of it was almost more than he could endure. These two poor Jews, trying to earn a living in a strange land, awkward and ignorant, suddenly dashed from life unpitied! Were they Russians, who had £ and

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from Christian hatred to prepare a place for their people in the land of tolerance and freedom? He looked out upon the brightening world. What a day to die! And, mercifully, they had not suffered. In one swift moment they were in the hands of God. Let the dead bury their dead; his duty henceforth was to the living.

Far out on the water the sunlight caught the flash of oars. It concentrated his attention to the spot, and he saw a boat clearing the driftwood of the current and gaining the quieter flood beyond. He reached for his glasses and trained them upon the rower. It was Josephine. Half an hour before, the sight would have thrown him into a fever of excitement, but now he watched her without emotion. The experience through which he had just passed made her impersonal to him; and yet, as she drew nearer, his heart stirred again, seeing the remembered beauty of her bright hair, loosened by the wind, and her strong young arms bared to the elbow.

Gradually her speed lessened, and he saw her turn her head from time to time, as if to measure the distance that remained. He guessed that the boat, so long unused, was leaking, and that she was trying to reach the railroad bank before it became submerged. There was no longer any question of actual danger. The water she had now reached

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could scarcely be more than two or three feet deep, below which the parkland stretched, level as a floor. But Josephine might not realise this fact. Her possible terror gave him an opportunity to rescue her, perhaps, though not in heroic fashion, and he hurried once more from the house.

She had already grounded the prow of her boat upon the cinders of the bank when he emerged above the track. He was some fifty yards below the spot where she stood, but she saw him at once. In fact, she had felt none of the terror he imagined, for the annual flood had been her familiar delight from childhood. During the whole experience, the chance of meeting Cresson was uppermost in her mind.

At his first view of her, she was bending over, wringing out the hem of her skirt; but now she straightened up and faced him, smiling. Her smile, the apparently high spirits in which she described her plight, struck him with a chill. He did not consider that she must meet him thus, in self-defence. The mood of the recent tragedy was still upon him. He could not have told just what he expected of her, but it was not light-heartedness, and so he regarded her more grimly than he knew.

"I saw you from my window," he explained, "and came down with the intention of wading out to your rescue."

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Josephine had often imagined meeting him alone on one of her visits to her old home, but never had she pictured a more favourable situation than this. There were many things she would like to talk of with him. She wished to tell him how much she appreciated his music that night in *The Little Gypsy*. She had thought that he might tell her in return how he happened to be there, and more about himself than she had ever known. And Cresson, too, had indulged in dreams no less romantic. But now that they were together, and alone, the cruel fact of her marriage was the absorbing consciousness of each. With others near, under difficulties, a mere glance of the eye would confess everything. Now her instinct told her that she must meet him as a mere friend, or rush into his arms.

"Oh, I was safe enough," she answered. "I could have waded ashore, though I should have looked like a fright."

She glanced down at the bedraggled hem of her skirt, and then for the first time realised that her arms were bare. Cresson had seen her bare-armed in those natural days, before the avenging angel had driven them from their Eden and drawn his sword against return. Only when she began to pull down her thin lawn sleeves did her self-consciousness infect him also. He watched her intently, to

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the very fastening of the small pearl buttons about her wrists, then caught himself up and flushed. His perturbation yielded her a thrill of pleasure. She had discovered that her power over men was greater since her marriage, and now she tasted some of the sweetness of revenge. He had been proud, and had made her suffer; she would make him suffer too. She talked casually of the height of the flood, the perfection of the weather, of everything but the personal subjects she had reserved for this moment, because she saw that it was for the personal that he hungered.

"But how am I going to get back, I wonder?" she asked finally, with a despairing little laugh.

"I'll see what can be done with the boat," he answered. "Perhaps we can patch it up."

Cresson was an athlete, but his ordinary strength would have been taxed by the feat he performed. The boat was heavy, and half filled with water. In spite of her protests, he drew it up on the bank, bending easily like a young giant, and turned it on its side. The water poured out over his shoes, but he did not notice it. She sat above and watched him, her eyes bright with secret admiration, her heart bitter with the thought of her husband, to whom such an effort would have been impossible. If her power over men was greater than formerly, so

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was her appreciation of them, and she saw how handsome he was, bare-headed there in the sunlight, flushed and strong.

"Find me a stick to prop this thing up with," he commanded.

She rose obediently, and after a search returned with a barrel stave. He took it from her, steadied the boat against the sun, and began to look for the leaks where they were shown by chinks of light. Then he went up to the track, and returned with a piece of tow.

"One can always find such packing along a railroad," he commented.

Josephine returned to her seat, and watched him while he inserted the stuff here and there with his penknife. Finally he took his handkerchief from his pocket.

"You're not going to use your handkerchief too?" she protested.

"Yes," he answered shortly. "I insist upon making the sacrifice."

"You might do it gracefully, at least," she told him, stung by his manner.

"I might," he admitted coolly, "if the graces of life seemed very important just now."

By some perversity, the memory of the pitiful tragedy of the earlier morning had been stealing like a shadow across his mind. He did not know

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why he should tell her of it, but he did so, relentless in his misery.

"I thought something was wrong when we first met," she said, awed by the recital.

"And if it had not been this particular thing," he retorted, "was there no other reason why I should meet you as if something had happened?"

She sat silent, her eyes set in a stare across the water, not displeased by his sudden turning upon her, but debating her reply. What was she to say? Could she confess her mistake, and ask his forgiveness? Had not she also something to forgive? She was startled by the splashing of the boat in the water. He held it by the rope, and turned.

"Josephine," he said, "you did n't make any remark upon the fact that those two men were Jews. It was tactful of you."

"I shall never forgive you for that speech," she answered coldly.

But it was his attitude of dismissal, his holding of the boat for her entrance, when she had been anticipating something so different, that she could not forgive.

"If you want me to go," she added, "I will."

"I do," he returned, with sudden passion. "You drive me mad with love of you. I have sinned enough, as it is."

"We shan't meet again for a long time," she

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told him. "I'm going abroad in a few days, to be gone a year, perhaps two."

"You're not going alone?" he asked.

"That was cruel of you," she flamed out, rising.

"Perhaps so," he answered grimly.

She stepped proudly past him into the boat, and grasping the stern with both hands, he pushed it from the bank, standing ankle-deep in the water. Her white lips framed a farewell, but she did not speak; and then she found herself rowing steadily, watching his motionless figure through her tears.

He had climbed to the top of the railroad bank when she reached the opposite shore, and she saw him wave his hand. The distance was too great for him to see her stoop, but he caught the white flash of her answer.

She went up the steps of the house and into the wide, old-fashioned kitchen, carrying his handkerchief with her. A fire was burning in the stove, and holding out her hands to the warmth, she caught sight of his monogram. This would be a startling treasure for her husband to discover in her possession, she reflected; and for that very reason she was tempted to keep it. Oddly enough, she remembered how Cresson had approved of burning the flowers which had been on the altar, because it was unseemly that gifts associated with that sacred place should be thrown out and trampled

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underfoot. At the thought, she thrust the handkerchief among the red coals and waited until it was consumed, then turned away thoughtfully, considering the act. It might mean such different things.

Cresson went back to his room and wrote his resignation to the bishop. He asked to be transferred to mission work in the Ghetto, and gave his reasons in full. An interview would have answered the purpose as well, but he wished to go on record irrevocably. His letter was a short biography before it was finished, but at no time during its composition did he feel the slightest hesitation. In the course of three days he received a reply, giving the desired permission, with the promise that his stipend would be continued in the new field. The bishop did not seem to think him a fanatic, nor his purpose a forlorn hope. On the contrary, he congratulated Cresson upon his peculiar privilege and opportunity. The young man read the letter and took heart, as one who had been promoted in the service of the Church. The same day the Berwyns sailed for Naples.

CHAPTER XXV

AFTER TWO YEARS

Two years later, in the month of May, the old Faile estate presented an unusual appearance. At a quarter past seven o'clock in the evening, three things happened coincidently to punctuate the flight of time: the sun disappeared behind the rim of the reservoir across the valley; the chimes in the tower of St. Basil's on the hill rang the first four notes of the Cambridge Quarters; and electric lights burst out like fireflies among the leaves of the forest.

The dwellers in the small houses that had sprung up about the estate looked from their windows and wondered to see the mansion illuminated and the grounds turned into fairyland. Most of them knew the history of the suburb for only two or three years; and they had scarcely heard the name of the family that lived in this relic of the past which seemed to draw haughtily within itself as the mob swarmed busily about its borders. So rapid in the suburb is the whirligig of time that it took an old inhabitant to remember Josephine Faile and her marriage; and few were able to guess that this

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illumination celebrated her return. Those that attended St. Basil's had merely heard of Cresson, the founder and first rector of the parish, for another reigned in his stead.

They sat at their evening meal and discussed this unusual occurrence, the grown people conjecturing the reason of it, and the children planning forays into the grounds, as soon as the darkness should deepen. Meanwhile, they were themselves the subject of conversation with those whom they discussed, not as individuals indeed, but as a collective phenomenon, a force, the pushing tide of the city seething about this island of seclusion.

There were five at table, — Mr. and Mrs. Faile, Josephine and Berwyn, and Mr. Uxbridge. It still lacked an hour before their guests from the city might arrive, yet everything was in readiness. The musicians were seated on the verandah, — a picturesque group of Italians in green velvet jackets, tuning their instruments, smoking and chatting. The caterer was on hand with his helpers. The tents on the lawn were securely pegged in place.

To see Mrs. Faile seated in her wheeled chair at the foot of the table, one would not imagine that this was her first social venture in many years. With her the art of entertaining, as with others the art of swimming, could not be forgotten when once learned. She had overruled the judge's protests and

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Josephine's doubts, and she felt sure of the result. Her old friends and her daughter's new ones had signified their intention of coming in sufficient numbers to assure the success of the fête. Even the weather was on her side. Mrs. Faile's mind was at ease to discuss the perennial topic.

"The work of destruction goes on, my dear," she said to Josephine. "From sunrise to sunset we hear the sound of blasting and hammering. One day I look out of my window to see that a certain tree has gone from the hill ; the next day its place is taken by the beams of a new house, that have the appearance of a gridiron set on edge ; the third day the house is finished, with a sign To Let in the window ; and the fourth day the family wash is hanging on the line."

"I should call that construction rather than destruction, mother," Josephine remarked.

"And nearly as wonderful as the creation of the world in a week," Mr. Uxbridge supplemented.

"Josephine," her mother returned, "I can see that you have no sympathy with me ; you no longer have any heart, and I hold your husband accountable for it. When Mr. Faile was consul to Paris, we did n't spend our time poking about among ruins in Egypt and Greece. We thought the life of to-day of some interest. I call it positively dehumanising."

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In spite of this protest, it was sufficiently evident that her son-in-law could not do anything very reprehensible in her eyes. And Berwyn was always charming when indulged.

"Your daughter is quite a scholar now, Mrs. Faile," he said. "When she first landed in Athens, she accented Theocritus on the penult, and now she can date a Greek vase by the workmanship of the figures."

"I always knew she had a mind," Mrs. Faile answered, "but I did n't think she could be a pedant."

"George and I have become frightfully congenial," Josephine put in lightly. "I quite feel as if I had received a college education."

There was truth in the declaration, for she had changed. It was inevitable that she should either influence or be influenced, and it was Berwyn who remained unaltered. She had not lost her beauty, but her fair skin was tanned and the brooding softness of her eyes had gone. Who would have supposed that Josephine could become a man's good comrade, with just the touch of flippancy and hardness which such a relationship develops?

"I shall never forget," she went on, "the time I began to read the classic poets in translation, so that I could understand some of my husband's learned references, and came across a love poem of

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Catullus which he had palmed off on me as his own before we were married. That was a tragic experience, and I don't know that I've forgiven him yet. I was going to get a divorce."

"Not adequate ground, I assure you," the judge remarked, with an effect of jocularity. But he watched her attentively in his quiet way, and was not satisfied. Somehow his little daughter had lost the dewy morning of her nature under Berwyn's parching influence, and since her return, a fortnight before, she had not been restored to him. Their old intimacy of heart was gone. It was easier for Josephine to talk with her mother now, because her mother was satisfied with the externals of her life. From her point of view, this particular offence of Berwyn was as nothing. To copy another's verses as an aid in winning a wife was one of those old-fashioned devices sanctioned by the court of love.

"Did I say the verses were mine?" Berwyn demanded. "According to my remembrance of the incident, I was silent on the point of authorship."

"But what was I to think?" Josephine retorted, appealing to the others.

The question evoked some humorous discussion upon the ethics of Berwyn's ruse, with the verdict rather in his favour. Perhaps it was with some idea of touching old memories that the judge presently

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brought the conversation back to the things Josephine had known and to the region of her childhood.

"Have you been up to see the church yet?" he asked her.

"Not yet," she answered, "but I mean to. You have n't become converted, father?"

"Mr. Uxbridge is the convert," he returned. "You know it was his money that completed the plan."

"Of all absurd things," Mrs. Faile interposed, "this mania of Mr. Cresson's is the worst."

"His successor has been scooping in the people," the judge said. "Just as Cresson was in a position to reap the harvest he had sown, he handed the scythe over to another man, and went down into Egypt to make bricks without straw."

"I never heard so many mixed metaphors in my life, judge," Berwyn exclaimed.

"My dear sir," Mr. Faile retorted, "if Mr. Shakespeare can take arms against a sea of troubles, our friend Cresson can reap bricks with a scythe, or whatever I said."

"How is he getting along with his new work, father?" Josephine enquired. She could ask the question without a tremor, though her husband's eyes were upon her, and her curiosity was keen.

"I hope he will be here to give an account of

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himself," the judge told her. "I sent him an invitation. Mr. Uxbridge keeps in closer touch with him than I do."

"If you mean to ask how many converts he has made," the architect said, "I don't know. But he has got a hearing, and that's something. I listened to him one night, myself; it was very interesting."

"Has he got a church?" she continued.

"A church? No. I heard him speak before a literary society. Those Jews are intellectual fellows, some of them."

Josephine wondered resentfully why he did not go on and give detailed information, without being questioned every step of the way; but the subject was dropped, leaving her curiosity whetted rather than satisfied. What she had heard had an unexpected flavour. A literary society in the Ghetto formed no part of her imaginings. Perhaps she had pictured Cresson preaching on a street corner to a crowd of peddlers. The questions she would have asked, if she could, were not such as Mr. Uxbridge would have been able to answer. Was he happy? How did he look? Did he give the impression of a beaten man? Had he become in any way queer and eccentric? Did he think of her, or had he outgrown his fancy? Perhaps, even, he was married, and to a Jewess. She could scarcely wait till she saw him again.

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After dinner the judge took Mr. Uxbridge to his study for a smoke, Mrs. Faile summoned her maid to wheel her into the kitchen for a final inspection of the preparations there, and Josephine was left alone with her husband.

"Let's go through the rooms," she suggested, "and see how they look. It seems strange to me that I have never seen this house lighted up before."

Berwyn took out a cigarette and followed obediently.

"I never realised before what a fine old place it was," he remarked.

"It's the improvements," she told him. "Look at these hardwood floors, and curtains, and electric lights. I wonder if it means another mortgage."

The three large rooms on the south wing of the building were to be devoted to the reception. The windows were open, the white curtains swayed in the breeze, and without they could see the lighted forest glimpses, where figures moved back and forth. In the last room they paused before a marble-topped table below the mantel, where two tall wax candles threw their light upon a medley of old books, manuscripts, and letters.

"Look at this," she exclaimed. "Poor mother has raked out all her relics for inspection. As if any one would care to see them at such a time."

Berwyn lighted his cigarette at one of the candles.

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"It looks like an altar, or ark of the covenant," he commented. "But these things are worth examining. Here's a letter of Lincoln, and one of Seward, and that looks like Greeley's scrawl. An illuminated chant-book, too, by Gad! That must be twelfth century work. And here's an Aldine edition of Persius and Juvenal."

He drew up a chair and sat down with a scholar's absorption, and Josephine wandered on alone. As she stepped out on to the verandah, she remembered that it was through this very window she had once made her escape with Berwyn from his uncle and Cresson. She felt no impulse to call him to her and remind him of the adventure; it seemed like a scene she had read in a novel, or an incident in the life of an acquaintance. In the same detached way she continued to think of Cresson, and a logical course of reasoning convinced her that she would find him impossible, but, perversely, she felt that the meeting with him would be the one interesting incident of the evening. She circled the house just in time to see the lamps of the first motor car coming down the road, and hurried in to take her place at her mother's side.

Mrs. Faile, sitting in her chair at the entrance of the drawing-rooms, was an impressive, even a beautiful, figure. If she wore a good many jewels, they became her well, and seemed not so much external

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adornments as cool interpreters of her nature. Yet there was the appeal of the feminine, too, in the soft laces that fell about her, in the quiet graciousness of her manner, and, above all, in her invalidism, borne with a woman's patience.

"Josephine," she said, "you are incorrigible. I can see that you have been wandering about the place. Just look at your hair."

"Never mind, mother dear," her daughter answered, smoothing the stray wisps into place with her hand. "The men like me better this way, I believe, and I don't care what the women think. But you will be the centre of attraction to-night."

Berwyn, coming from his manuscripts reluctantly, thought that Josephine looked her best. In reality, her mother's criticism was captious. The country girl had become the well-groomed woman of the world, one with the set in which she moved, and if another might miss a touch of softness and romance which was once there, to her husband the loss was gain.

The Barneys were the first to come. They told Mrs. Faile of the time they discussed the possibility of renting Berwyn's house, while he listened to them, leaning against the hydrant.

"Such spooning," Berwyn commented. "And there I stood, taken for a tramp, and heard them vilify my place."

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"You've never quite forgiven me, I can see," Mrs. Barney said.

"Oh, yes, I have," he assured her. "In fact, the fault was mine. I should have followed Trimalchio's example, if I wished to hear compliments."

"Don't leave the story there, George," said Barney. "You know perfectly well we have never heard of the gentleman. He's some classical chap, I suppose."

"Your husband is too deep for us, Mrs. Berwyn," his wife added.

"And for me, too," Josephine said, laughing. "I live to learn."

"But the story," Barney insisted. "What did What's-his-name do?"

Berwyn's eyes lighted up with mirth. "He invited his friends to a feast, and when he had gotten them all in a sufficiently mellow humour, he lay down on a couch, covered himself with a mantle, and said, 'Now pretend that I am dead. Let me hear you say something nice about me.' I ought to have let you know that I stood near by, only pretending to be dead."

While they lingered, other guests were beginning to arrive, threading their way in automobiles between the rail fences on the raised road through the woods, or driving across the park from the station in carriages the judge had sent to meet them.

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The procession by Mrs. Faile's chair became continuous, but she seemed unwearied. It was for this that she had made efforts which would have taxed the strength of a younger and stronger woman. Because she could not go to the world, she had induced the world to come to her, that she might see her only remaining child in her proper setting, and witness with her own eyes the success of the marriage she had done so much to bring about.

Josephine continued to play her part with half her mind, not that even half a mind was needed to murmur conventional greetings to the quickly passing guests. She was watching for Cresson with an anticipation which became painful in its intensity; and finally, when it was apparent that he had not come, she turned away, feeling like one who leaves a railroad platform, disappointed, after the last passenger has disappeared. Her duty as a hostess was practically done. She might be here or there; no one would know, not even her mother, now safely relegated to a quiet corner with a few old friends, who had come to see her rather than her daughter.

She saw that Berwyn was steering one of the attendants to her mother's chair with refreshments, and knew that she would keep him there awhile, at least. Some of the guests were scattered about the rooms, others had wandered out upon the lawn.

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On the verandah an Italian was singing an operatic air with the strange abandon of his race, and the music, echoing through the brilliant rooms and far out into the night, gave a touch of magic to the scene. She rid herself of a young man who came to her with a plate of salad, not caring much how she managed to do it, and passed into the southern room.

The first sound she heard was the architect's pervading voice and hearty laugh, as he left some acquaintance with a farewell jest and continued his search for diversion. Josephine followed him out on to the lawn.

"How would you like to walk with me about the grounds?" she suggested. "I haven't seen anything of you since my return."

"I was thinking the same thing," he answered. "In fact, I was beginning to be hurt. I felt quite like a former admirer who had been turned down."

Josephine laughed, and taking his arm with a touch of her old impulsiveness, she steered him away from the refreshment tents toward the darker woods that bordered the river. The artificial receded with the receding lights, and every leaf above her head whispered memories of the place which had long lain dormant in her mind. It was with the deliberate purpose of experimenting with these emotions that she brought her companion to the

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very bench by the water which had been the scene of her first serious quarrel with Cresson.

The Cambridge Quarters, which she had heard at the dinner table, were ringing again. They counted the strokes, sixteen in number, and waited for the hour. There was a peculiar solemnity in the deeper bell, contrasted with the lighter notes that preceded it; but the contrast with the distant scene of gaiety was more impressive still. Below, a network of lights strung for the night; fitting figures that would never come that way again, perhaps; inconsequential words and laughter; and up on the hill a church bell tolling the unheeded flight of time.

"How did you happen to complete the plan of the buildings?" she asked him.

"Professional pride merely," he answered. "The result is very good, but after this my door is closed to impecunious young missionaries from the Bronx. I've no doubt they are nice fellows, but I can't afford the luxury of their acquaintance."

"Mr. Cresson must have been pleased," she commented.

"It was for his sake I did it. I felt that he ought to have the satisfaction of building one church, at least, since he would probably never build another."

"I'm sorry he did not come to-night," she told him frankly. "I wanted to see him again."

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"It's often possible to see him, and hear him, too," Mr. Uxbridge returned. "If the mountain won't come to us, we shall have to go to the mountain. Some night you and George and I might go down to the Ghetto and hear him give one of his lectures. How would you like that?"

She saw how innocently he played into her hands, and the prospect of seeing Cresson again made it easy for her to drop the subject, after saying that she was sure George would be as much interested as herself.

"Do you remember our conversation in the carriage, going home from the entertainment for the Seamen's Institute?" he asked her. "Well, George has n't resumed his writing, and I don't know that it makes so much difference, after all. It merely illustrates the limits of our influence over the lives of others. But the main thing is that my prophecy of an understanding between you has come true. Did n't I say that things would adjust themselves in time?"

"Yes, you did," she assented, "and you were right."

Uxbridge tried to think that he was content, but underneath there was an uneasy consciousness, an intuition he would fain smother, that the relationship was not quite as perfect as he had hoped.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE EMPTY HOUSE

JOSEPHINE was surprised by the persistency with which the thought of Cresson haunted her mind, now that she was back in the old surroundings. Had he remained where he was, doing the same work, she might have met him more easily, and have discovered in him only a parish priest, with parochial horizons. But the architect's respect and loyalty influenced her imagination. Mr. Uxbridge was not a man to admire fanaticism. If he preferred the rich and varied and unusual, something with a flavour, there must be an element of intellect and achievement in it too. Looking at Cresson through his eyes, he assumed some of that magnitude which Tacitus ascribes to the unknown.

Berwyn had fallen back into his old ways. She saw less of him than during their travels abroad. The conditions of their honeymoon seemed in a measure reproduced, so that the intervening period took on something of unreality. The good-fellowship remained, but it was a relationship that gave mutual liberty. She understood that he was having a man's time among his friends ; and once, when he

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referred to business cares, she took it as a jest and reminded him lightly of the antiquity of the excuse. She allowed him to leave the house without those foolish warnings and solicitous instructions which so many husbands decry and appreciate, for she assumed, as he would have her do, that he was able to take care of himself.

Thus the three weeks following their return passed, interrupted by the one reception in the Bronx. That much he had conceded to her family, but other functions she attended alone. They were much like college-mates, who room in the same house and have something in common to talk about when they meet at meals, though taking different courses of study. One noon, when he came down to breakfast, she joined him at the table.

"George," she said, "I want you to dine at home to-night, and go with your uncle and me."

"What is it?" he asked warily.

"To hear Mr. Cresson talk to the Jews. It ought to be dreadfully queer and interesting. You know you said you would like to go with us."

He looked at her with a gleam of interest in his eyes.

"You used to be in love with him, did n't you, Josephine? Or was it merely that he was in love with you?"

"Neither," she declared serenely. "That was

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only an affair. If I entertained any lingering sentiment about him, would I be inviting you to come too, when I could easily have gone with your uncle alone?"

"The argument is conclusive," he admitted. "But still, I hardly think he would be overjoyed to see me. You remember with what scorn he sent me my furniture and typewriter, prepaid."

His sense of humour was infectious, and she laughed with him.

"Prepaid, by Gad," he repeated.

The intimation that this was an unusual thing for a Jew to do was so obvious that she could not fail to see it.

"You're wicked," she told him, "really malicious."

"Well, I'll go," he promised. "I'll go and hear your Hebrew prophet. Why not? Any one has a right to attend a public performance. It is public, is n't it? What is the nature of the thing, anyhow?"

"I've just been talking with Mr. Uxbridge over the telephone, and he says it's something unusual, — a revival of old Jewish melodies by a musical society Mr. Cresson has gotten up, with a lecture, or sermon, or something like that, afterwards. He says there will be some distinguished Jews from up town present. Of course we have a right to go. I

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doubt if Mr. Cresson will even see us, if that is any consolation to you."

"That's a clever scheme of his," Berwyn remarked. "The music is sure to be a success, and to soften the savage breast. The audience can scarcely refuse to stay for a talk, so he gets a hearing, at any rate. But it's not a matter of religion, to my mind; it's a matter of race. The Jews hang together because they feel that to embrace Christianity is to turn traitor. They hate us, and always will. I don't know that I blame them."

Josephine left him with an impression of the reality of his interest, and she reflected that it was some time since he had been moved to so much pleasantry. Lately his mood had been dull gray. Experience had taught her to expect these periods of depression, and to wait without question for their passing. She might suspect a physical cause, but Berwyn was not a man who could brook to be regulated, or even advised; and she was bound to admit that he gave all the liberty he demanded.

At dinner she felt that she had lost him again. He remembered his appointment and returned, but it seemed that only the physical man was there, taking his part mechanically in the conversation, when obliged to do so, but without vital participation. It was this drawing of a veil between himself and others that gave Berwyn a certain fascination at

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times. He repelled and attracted, suggesting a conjecture as to whether there were something behind that veil, or nothing. Was this mere stupidity, the lethargy of a man out of condition, or were his thoughts such as would stir the very depths of life, could he give them words?

The problem occupied Josephine's mind subconsciously. She listened while Mr. Uxbridge discussed the lately proposed plans for a new City Hall and Post Office, until he gradually forced his nephew into an appearance of interest. It was borne in upon her again that the older man had the younger heart and the warmer imagination. The architect was for condemning any amount of property, paying any price, and building grandly. It was Berwyn who suggested the practical difficulties, and took a deprecatory view of the scheme, based upon the inevitability of graft, and the New York mania for mere bigness as the norm of achievement.

"I don't know whether you are perverse," Mr. Uxbridge stormed finally, "or whether you believe that the art of building has made no progress since the time of Pericles. As for graft, my dear sir, the Parthenon reeked with it. Did n't Pericles plunder the treasury of the Delphic League to make his city beautiful?"

"I merely occupy the ungracious position of the

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conservative, uncle," Berwyn replied, amused by the tempest he had aroused.

"Pooh," the other retorted contemptuously. "The truth is, you were born out of your time. Nothing appeals to you unless it is about three thousand years old."

Berwyn accepted the indictment, untroubled. "Perhaps I am a reincarnation of some old Greek; who knows?"

But the thing that impressed Josephine was his profound indifference to his city and his century. At Corinth, in Crete, in Egypt, she had seen him feverishly active for days, watching the diggers among ancient ruins, seizing upon some mutilated fragment, as a miser seizes upon an ingot of gold, studying it, cleaning it, working over it, deciphering the inscription, and pronouncing judgment. It was upon these subjects that he had convictions, and disputes with his fellow workers would arouse his utmost acumen. She remembered his writing an article concerning a certain statue, and his distress when it could find no place in the *Journal of Archæology*, on the ground that the subject had been overdone and must now make way for another. Such an incident as this gave him emotion.

Meanwhile, she had not been bored. Some of the finds she really admired, and some of the disappointments were rich in material for mirth.

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When Berwyn took a trip too arduous for her, she amused herself with any chance acquaintance she might pick up at the hotel. His confidence in her discretion was complete, but she suspected that it was not so much confidence as indifference or forgetfulness. So she met some entertaining people, saw many interesting things, gave her husband no trouble, and became what he would have her be.

The dinner did not pass without a flashlight of fun. Josephine was expressing her fear that they might be conspicuous that evening among so many Jews, when Uxbridge interrupted her with a reminiscent twinkle in his dark eyes.

"Don't be concerned for that, my dear. When they see you in my company, they will think you properly introduced. I remember once, in my younger days, borrowing a railroad pass from a Jewish friend of mine, and my trepidation when the conductor read the name of Steinberg. I was prepared to perjure myself, but he passed on without a question. Evidently the correspondence between the name and the face was perfect. At the time I was somewhat unreasonably indignant, but now I confess to being rather proud of my resemblance to the chosen people. We'll get in all right, and no questions asked, be sure."

On their way to the lecture, Josephine wondered whether her husband remembered their drive to

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The Little Gypsy, and if so, with what emotions; but she was inclined to think that he had forgotten it. She would have been glad if Uxbridge were equally absorbed in some thoughts of his own, but the Jews were still his theme. He was one of those who had caught the fever of interest in the Hebrew race, and she divined his touch of vanity that his rich personality enabled him to pass for one of them so easily. It was not the religious genius of the Jews, their family virtues, their financial importance, their ability, nor the Zionist movement, that interested her, but the possible power of one man, himself half a Jew, to impress them. She found herself concerned for Cresson's success. She knew the music would be good, as Berwyn had said, but what of the address? What could he do with hostile or indifferent listeners? Would there be a disturbance? Would he have the tact to present his argument without antagonising?

There was the same interminable tangle of streets she remembered, the same confusion of languages, both written and spoken, but from the open carriage her view of the scene was better than on that winter night. She experienced none of the sensitive shrinking of the country girl from foreign sights and sounds and odours. Naples and Constantinople and Cairo had enured her to such things; they had even given her a taste for them, so that now she

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did not wonder, as she would have done formerly, how Cresson could endure to spend so much of his time there. It was in this new attitude of mind, perhaps, that her husband's influence had been most felt. She would never forsake the conventional life, as he had done, but she no longer took it seriously. She despised and valued it in a breath, and enjoyed such an escape as this into Bohemia.

The architect's prophecy came true. Theirs was not the only carriage that drew up before the door in Christie Street, to the interest of that crowded quarter. Uxbridge called her attention to a well-known Jewish philanthropist and financier, who left his automobile just ahead of them and preceded them up the stairs. The procession was continuous, for the hour had already come. Josephine had never been in such an audience before, and she appreciated what Berwyn meant when he whispered to her that he felt as if he were being drowned in the waters of Jordan. She was struck by the beauty of many of the younger women, and felt that she must look inconsequential, and as pale as thistle-down, by comparison.

The element of the dramatic was lacking in her first glimpse of Cresson. He must have been in the hall when they entered, and presently she caught sight of him on the platform, moving about among

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his musicians. She had supposed that he would take the baton himself, but when the confusion of tuning subsided and the programme began with an unannounced orchestral number, he was sitting at one side, a listener.

Josephine saw the appropriateness of this at once, and breathed more freely. It was not only that he gained good feeling by effacing himself in favour of another leader. If he were to speak with power, he must stand for one thing only in the minds of his audience. She thought she knew him so well, but in reality she knew him so little. Had he played a brilliant solo on the violin, as she half expected him to do, she would have been deeply moved, no doubt, but she would have pitied his divided aims, perhaps have patronised him in her mind. But now, for the first time, she realised his judgment, and the honour in which he held his mission.

The music ceased, and Cresson came to the edge of the platform. Across the glare of the footlights he could not see her, far down at the end of that crowded hall, and she was thankful for this, though it had the corresponding disadvantage that she was unable to tell whether he had changed. When he began to speak, she felt that a change was there, though it was not to be discovered, perhaps, in deepening lines and grey hairs. It was all in the manner, in the spiritual emanation, slightly differ-

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ent from that she had known. She had seen him in the vestments of a priest, with the accessories of the Church about him, appealing to the emotions of his congregation; and now he was simply a man among men, explaining unpretentiously the nature of his present effort. Not till this moment did she realise that she had come to hear selections from the ancient Hebrew psalms, sung in the original language, to the accompaniment of instruments as nearly as possible like those used in the Temple services. As Cresson gave the number of the first psalm, there was a flutter of leaves near her, and she turned to see a scholarly-looking man adjusting his glasses. Uxbridge told her that he was a rabbi from up town, and that the melodies which were about to be sung had long since fallen out of use in the service of the synagogue.

The programme that followed was scarcely intelligible to Josephine in parts, though Berwyn fared better. He understood at least what Cresson meant when he referred to the middle Persian and early Greek period. Uxbridge produced his Prayer Book, and they were able to grasp the sentiment of the selections. It was all a revelation to Josephine. She had never considered the sources of the Psalter, nor thought of it as a collection of lyric poems. Now she heard them sung, sometimes in simple cantillation to the accompaniment of the flute or harp,

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sometimes antiphonally, sometimes in full chorus. There was an Ode for the Dedication of a Temple, the Song of the Vineyard, and the Songs of Pilgrimage. Cresson discussed the various theories of these last: whether they were sung by pilgrims on their way to the three great feasts of the Jews, or in ascending the steps of the Temple, or during the return from the Babylonian exile. It was the sort of thing that appealed particularly to Berwyn, and he listened attentively. He alone of the three was able to appreciate the scholarship of the discussion.

The last number of the musical programme was the Twenty-second Psalm. In the ancient liturgy it was sung to a tune called *Ajeleth Shahar*, "the hind of the dawn," but the present setting was Cresson's own, his one original contribution to the entertainment. As the song of suffering unfolded in the rich voice of the barytone singer, Josephine, following the text in the English version, felt her heart beat faster in vague anticipation. She did not know that this was one of the great Messianic prophecies, the Psalm of the Passion, used on Good Friday, but she could not escape the figure of the crucifixion: *They pierced my hands and my feet; I may tell all my bones: they stand staring and looking upon me.*

What would he say of it in his comment? If

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he were to preach at all, this was the one selection used that evening which might be made the text of his message. The interest of the other odes was mainly musical and antiquarian, but this must be interpreted in terms of the Christian faith. Her intuition was correct. After the final triumphant close in full chorus, with orchestral accompaniment, there was a burst of applause. It was a tribute to the composer. The spirit of the ancient melodies had been preserved, and the merging of the solitary voice of the sufferer into the victorious climax at the end was a musical achievement of no mean merit.

Cresson began his interpretation by a discussion of the authorship: whether the psalm were David's, or Jeremiah's, or some later poet's, in the time of the captivity. Then he made the application. He did not preach a sermon, in the ordinary sense of the word; his attitude might almost have been called professorial, in keeping with the general tone of the evening. He was dealing with an intellectual audience, and his thesis was susceptible of proof. As St. Stephen, in his defence before the council, argued from the prophets to those who read and believed them, so Cresson gave his reasons for believing that the prophecies of the Old Testament had been fulfilled in the New. The Messiah they waited for had come.

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At the last he suddenly abandoned the impersonal. He told something of the story of his life, and his double heritage. He did not come to them as an outsider, offering a foreign religion as better than their own. Christ was their own prophet, their own Messiah. To acknowledge him was to return to the Zion which had been the dream of the race for ages, and the subject of its noblest predictions. Only, it was a spiritual return, not to a place, but to a faith. It was thus that the race would reach the great destiny of God's chosen people. He recalled the achievements of the Jews, their writers and artists, their men of constructive imagination. The pronoun "we" was now woven into his speech, and there was the very spirit of the proudest Hebrew in his final declaration that in the centuries to come the stone, his own race, once rejected by the builders, would be the very keystone of the Republic.

It would have been impossible to guess how much of the applause which greeted this peroration was due to racial pride, stirred by his prophecy of power, how much was perfunctory courtesy, and how much was conviction. The meeting broke up in confusion. There was a babel of discussion among the outgoing throng, musical, theological, and political. Josephine, about to join in the procession toward the street, was surprised by her husband's detaining hand. She looked at him with

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enquiry in her eyes, for she could not speak. The emotions of the evening had reached their climax, and she wished to get away, relying upon the architect's ready tongue to cover her silence and give her time.

"We might wait and see Cresson," Berwyn suggested.

Mr. Uxbridge seconded the proposal warmly, and she could not refuse; but as the crowd thinned, and she saw Cresson coming slowly down the aisle, she feared for the event. He recognised Uxbridge first, and she noted his smile of welcome; then his start at sight of the architect's companions told her plainly why he had not come to the reception in the Bronx. He did not refuse to shake hands with them, but his manner was cold, and she divined his resentment that they should have sought him out as a curiosity. Yet he would be civilised, as by main strength.

"You are looking well from your trip abroad, Mrs. Berwyn," he told her.

Her chill of disappointment gave her voice. If he were determined to be conventional, she could be equally so.

"And you have n't changed either," she answered quietly. "I am so glad Mr. Uxbridge brought us here to-night. We would n't have missed it for a good deal."

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"I would like to talk more with you, Cresson, about this subject," the architect put in. "You had me pretty well confused in places. Gad, if I could get the different festivals and dates straightened out! But I suppose you did n't fly over the heads of the rest of your audience."

"Probably not," Cresson answered, "though that is always a difficult matter to decide. One does n't want to explain the obvious, nor yet be obscure."

"I propose that we adjourn to the Café Boulevard, or somewhere," Berwyn said, "and thresh the matter out. We have n't seen you for a long time, Cresson, and we are very much indebted to you for an evening of extraordinary interest."

"Thank you," the other returned, and the haughtiness of his manner was unmistakable. "I can't very well get away to-night. I have some things to attend to here before going home."

Berwyn's face grew blank. When he saw that his overture was rejected, he seemed to shrink once more behind his impersonal veil, not in resentment, but in fatalistic acquiescence. Josephine flushed with distress; for the first time she resented something for her husband and was sorry for him.

"I don't know what was the matter with Cresson to-night," Uxbridge began, when they were seated in the carriage. "He must have been very tired."

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I suppose he experienced a reaction from the tension of the evening, and wanted to be left alone. That was an ordeal for him. There were some pretty keen critics present. The way he managed to deliver his message as part of his exegesis, and to soften it by an appeal to race pride, was superb."

The excuse had its effect upon Josephine, and her resentment died away. She could understand so well how he must have felt, and she could see that there was dignity and self-respect in his refusal. How could he have sat eating and drinking with the man who had deceived him and the woman he once loved, as if nothing had happened? How, indeed, if he cared for her still?

It was this last question that haunted her. She knew as well as if he had told her that he had not outgrown his love; and what of herself? She could only admit that she did not know him, when she rejected him so easily, caught, like one of her own birds, by a little chaff, a few verses, a few compliments, the lure of social opportunity, the glamour of the adventurous and unconventional. And what had she won? Her heart was never satisfied. She had almost forgotten she had one till to-night, when the depths of her nature were stirred with a pain of awakening she could scarcely endure.

Her mood toward Berwyn was cruel, but shot through with pity. Compared with Cresson, he was

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insignificant and colourless; but she was fond of him. Every one was fond of him. But why had he taken her? Why had he not let her alone, if he could never give himself in return for what she had given? His remoteness was maddening to her now, as it had been sometimes early in their married life. What was he thinking of there beside her? Was it of her, or of Cresson, or of some Old World problem? Or was he simply not thinking at all?

When they had bidden Uxbridge good-night and entered the house, he led the way to the dining-room, and lighted the gas.

"I must have something to drink," he told her. "These bottled cocktails are no good; I don't know why I keep them. Don't go—sit down—I've something to tell you."

She sat down in her usual place and drew off her gloves, watching him while he went to the side-board and prepared his drink, wondering what he had to say. Her conscience named Cresson as the subject, but her reason rejected the guess. Her husband had nothing to complain of in her, and she doubted bitterly whether he cared enough for her to complain, even if she gave him cause. So she waited, whipping the palm of her hand nervously with her long gloves.

Berwyn sipped his beverage and lighted a cigarette, looking at her steadily with his veiled im-

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personality of effect, until she could stand it no longer.

"What is it, George?" she asked sharply. "Don't keep me in suspense."

"The fact is, I am ruined," he announced.

"Ruined?" she echoed.

"Yes," he repeated, "ruined. I've lost my money, most of it in speculation, some of it in gifts to that confounded Archæological Institute. It's all gone, at any rate. There's nothing left but this old house. Fortunately, that's yours. I had the saving sense to make it over to you, for I must have guessed that otherwise it would go with the rest."

Josephine did not know why it was of her mother that she thought first, but so it was, and a memory of the recent reception stirred her heart to pity. How pathetic all that effort at entertaining seemed now for her last remaining child, who had made a brilliant marriage.

"My poor mother!" she exclaimed.

"It is pretty rough on her," he admitted, wincing. "I don't know what to do. It's my perverse habit of experimenting. I'd tried everything else but stock gambling, so I gambled in stocks. Curiously enough, my uncle put me up to it, though he did it innocently. When I first came back, he told me I might increase my property if I tried. So

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I tried gambling. I was well off, but my fortune was old-fashioned compared with some. I thought I'd like to find out how it seemed to be immensely rich, in the modern sense. You may have read about the slump in Wall Street a few days ago. I was on the wrong side of the market, as usual, and got cleaned out."

"But you scarcely gave a sign of trouble," she said, wondering.

"No — it was the old poker habit, and held good. Somehow, I thought I'd win out, but I always drew the wrong cards. It became really ridiculous. I think I enjoyed it, in a way. It would have been worth while, if you had n't been involved."

"What are you going to do?" she asked him. "You might get it back in some way. Why not go to your uncle? He would help you out."

"I'll die first," he said grimly. "Think it over, and you'll see why. I'm not resourceful. I've thought of a good many things, only to reject them. What can I do? I won't be a beggarly school-teacher. My studies have been too desultory to fit me for a university professorship, and I never went beyond the bachelor's degree. I know nothing about business; and as for writing, what little brains I ever had have gone wool-gathering."

"How much is this house worth?" she asked,

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brightening. The problem was evidently referred to her for solution, and a latent practicality in her nature rose to meet it.

"Nothing," he answered; "but the land would bring about three hundred thousand dollars any day in the open market."

"Well, sell it," she suggested. "Why not?"

"Why does n't old Trinity sell its graveyard?" he demanded. "I may have a foolish sense of *noblesse oblige*, but I'm not willing to cheapen the property of the few old families that still hold out here. The purchaser would put an apartment house on the site."

"But we could live on the interest of the money."

"How?" he asked. "The Berwyns have always had their own place and lived like gentlemen. Would you like to move into an apartment overlooking Central Park, with an elevator, hot and cold water, electric lights, and all the modern improvements?"

"I would n't mind it," she said, truly enough. "We've lived anywhere and everywhere for the last two years, and you've always knocked about."

"But there was always the old place to come back to," he reminded her. "It was always an essential part of me."

"Essential?" she echoed, incredulous.

"Yes, essential."

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"Then, if you must keep it, George, I'll take in boarders."

"I really believe you're not joking, Josephine," he said, with a sombre smile. "Of course, we should lose social standing at once, and disgrace the neighbourhood as well. No; there's no way out. There is n't enough left to live on decently, no matter how you look at it. It's an open question whether life is worth living at all, if you can't live it as you've been accustomed to."

Her mind was too wholesome to see the drift of these last words, and she had never really understood the utter paganism of his point of view. Had he shown a man's initiative and power, he might have won her by his very misfortune. She was one to respond to the call for action, but his negation appalled her. Never had he seemed so remote, so well-nigh inhuman. At last she ceased to advise him, in sheer despair.

"I can see that you're tired, Josephine," he said, not unkindly, "and you must go to bed. I'll go out and take a walk. I feel wakeful, and I'll turn the thing over in my mind. Perhaps the lightning flash will illuminate me; who knows?"

After the door had closed behind him, she ran out into the hall to call him back, but paused till it was too late, held by a realisation of the futility of further effort. She went to bed, and lay awake,

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watching the electric light in the street shining on the ceiling of her room, and thinking intently. She had been disloyal to him in heart, but not in act, and she had been willing, even eager, to stand by him in his trouble. But there was nothing left on which her loyalty could hang. Material circumstances were everything to him, and now that his wealth was gone, he had become a shadow of his former self. There was nothing warm or passionate, no tempest of repentance, to arouse her sympathy, merely a quiet statement of fact, and an intellectual appreciation of her plight. The same coldness which made it possible for him to inflict such suffering upon his uncle enabled him to dispense with the sympathy of others.

Josephine saw the pathos of his situation, but she could not feel it. His own attitude made feeling impossible. She could not enter his inner life. He seemed strangely like the old house itself, as she had first seen it, the doors locked, the curtains drawn, silent and tenantless.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE LAST EXPERIMENT

THE next noon Berwyn had his breakfast brought up to his room. This was an exception to his rule, for his rest was usually not so untroubled, nor his dreams so sweet, as to make his bedroom a place he cared to linger in beyond his waking. He took the precaution of sending word to Josephine that he was not ill, and would be down presently. What he desired most just now was a little time to himself. He ate nothing, however, and merely drank his coffee thirstily, staring out into the garden at the back of the house, from which the warm sunlight was drawing the faint odours of new flowers that drifted into his open window. His man showed his concern and pressed him to eat.

"I could n't do it, Parker," Berwyn protested, "even for the beneficent purpose of prolonging indefinitely your present situation. Don't distress yourself about my health. When I'm done for, you can easily find another place as good as this, or better."

He found dressing an irksome matter, and recalled with appreciation the suicide of a certain

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Frenchman for no other reason than because he was weary of the toilsome ministrations to the body. On other mornings he shaved himself, but to-day he could not trust his unsteady hands. Even after his valet had performed that duty, when he was fully dressed, and every hair in place, he was shocked by his reflection in the mirror.

"What must I have looked like when I first woke up?" he murmured. "I'm becoming tired of that face."

Presently he sat down at his desk and wrote a note, in which he recommended his servant to the service of a friend who was then looking for a valet.

"Here, Parker," he said, "deliver this to Mr. Leggett in person. You may take it now. I'm going out myself soon, and don't know when I shall be back. You can take your time."

When the man was gone, he locked the door softly, and turned back to his desk. His eyes fell upon a little volume, *The Adventures of Angeloro*, lying among the scattered papers. He took it up and examined it curiously. This collection of his tales was his one bid for immortality. It was published about the time of his marriage, and after a six months' moderate popularity it had passed into the limbus of forgotten books. He threw the volume far out into the garden, and without look-

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ing to see where it fell, he went over to his bureau and took out a small, ivory-handled revolver. As he thrust it into his pocket, he reflected that this was a stupid, Anglo-Saxon method of making his exit from the stage; but even in this matter his invention failed him.

"If anything should happen to me," he mused, "Josephine would be left better off than when I found her, at any rate. And I think she would not be inconsolable."

The conviction enabled him to meet her without concern. She was sitting in the eastern drawing-room by the window, her hair irradiated by the sunlight, giving the effect of youth and colour, until he saw the wanness of her face.

"I've been thinking it all over, George," she said, "and have come to the conclusion —"

"You must n't think," he interrupted, smiling down upon her. "It does n't agree with any one to think too much, especially with a woman. Contrary to the proverb, your first thought was best. I believe I'll go up now and see my uncle."

"I wish you would," she urged. "That's what I was going to say. There's no other way. You know he would stand by you."

He did not kiss her good-bye, nor vary in the slightest degree from his usual manner, and the parting gave her no warning. If he seemed a little

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preoccupied, there was reason for it. The impending interview would not be easy. As Berwyn said, he was "up against it for fair," this time ; but she shared his apparent exhilaration by sheer reaction, and saw him go with no deep stirring of the heart.

Berwyn's lightness was assumed. He reached the street and looked back at the house, and at Josephine sitting in the window, perhaps for the last time ; but his weariness precluded all other sensations. He felt and walked like an old man. He had not the slightest intention of going to see his uncle. To go would be to make a pitiful spectacle of himself. He would not face that judge again.

He took the crosstown car to Third Avenue and ascended the stairs to the elevated road, drawing his breath quickly at the exertion. He was filled with annoyance and resentment at this desertion of his strength. He had always hated sick people, and to drag a sick man about with him was offensive to his love of youth and attractiveness. During the long ride into the Bronx the curious impression of a dual personality remained with him, as if he had been saddled with an objectionable companion whom he would be rid of if he could.

He remembered the first time he had taken that ride, three years ago the coming September, and noted the successive landmarks, then so strange, but now so familiar. It would be a heroic thing

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to get off at the next station, to go and see his uncle and face the music, to try to retrieve himself, and to become a splendid failure, for of course he would fail. He had never done anything else. But heroism was a meaningless word to Berwyn; he merely played with the thought, and speculated upon the possibility as if it were a philosophical proposition of purely academic interest. At Pelham Avenue he left the train, for no other reason than that this was the station before the last, and to go on to Bronx Park was to run the risk of meeting Judge Faile.

Once in the Kingsbridge Road, he had some thought of ascending the hill to the Poe cottage, which he had often visited in the long walks he used to take about that region. But the languor of the sunny day was oppressive, and the dusty, unattractive road sent up quivering waves of heat. Nolan's Tavern, at the foot of the hill, another relic of Poe's time, offered a welcome alternative. That too had been one of his haunts, formerly a country store at the cross-roads, where the poet, after a ten-mile tramp from the city, used to sit and drink his pennyworth of rum. At least, this was the story Berwyn had heard from the present proprietor, who had himself been for thirty-five years in possession of the place, and had received it from his predecessor, the very dispenser of the draught.

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It was for this reason that Nolan's Tavern, that battered old wooden shell, saved thus long by miracle from the maw of the devouring city, had always seemed a romantic spot to Berwyn, one of the very few in his native land. He detested the sweet home verses of his country's favourite poets, but he loved Poe's pagan pride and demoniac despair, as he loved Anacreon and Catullus and Paul Verlaine and Alfred de Musset.

Three o'clock found him still sitting at one of the tables in the little bar-room, the very place where he had written several of his adventures of Angeloro. He had eaten something to sustain his strength, and he was drinking heavily, but without effect. Only his ego seemed sublimated and contemplative. An odd sense of humour, an appreciation of the absurdity of the struggle for supremacy, possessed him. He judged the world as one judges who is lifted above it and detached from its interests.

He saw the millions of men swarming in and out of ancient Nippur and Babylon and Memphis and Thebes. How they troubled themselves, when they might have been at peace! Their very memorials had perished with them. Here and there patient scholars had unearthed the name of a king, a Turgu, or a Sargon, once master of the world, now a pinch of dust and a catalogue of conquests. But where

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were the multitudes who fought for his glory, toiled to feed and clothe him, who loved and hated and feared and envied on their own account? An incredible delusion of achievement possessed them; but the real achievement was to attempt nothing in the face of relentless Fate. And he had once written a little book, and had felt the blandishments of fame!

Berwyn left the tavern as the afternoon was waning, and took a northerly direction, through Bedford Park, following back streets, intent upon skirting, rather than entering, the region where he and Josephine and Cresson had played a brief drama. At last, from the Mosholu Parkway, he caught sight of the Williamsbridge Reservoir, the huge mound which Cresson had pointed out to him during their first walk together from the cemetery, and the object which had terminated the western prospect from his windows while he lived in Cresson's house. It rose above the valley, bare and level, flanked at either end by squat stone towers that suggested to his mind those mediæval fortresses which dot the barren coasts of southern Spain and Sardinia.

He noted casually the changes of the last two years. Orchards, wherein he had wandered, were now traversed by streets, and the fringe of frame houses, which formerly extended only along Web-

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ster Avenue, had deepened westward, to the very base of the hill. He climbed the narrow pathway up the green embankment to the gravel walk that encircled the oval. No one was there to disturb his solitude, and all the shadows of the coming night seemed to concentrate in the quiet waters.

Berwyn leaned on the iron fence and looked into the dark basin. Here was a symbol of his own life, artificial in externals, — the mound, the path, the iron fence, the stone beach, — holding an imprisoned flood. So his soul had always been imprisoned, it seemed to him, by circumstances; and though, like the water of the reservoir, it might mirror the clouds and the starlight at times, it never moved, it never carried the vision on. In another respect also the place reminded him of his own life, — in its utter loneliness.

Yet his was no shivering soul, hurrying onward to oblivion to escape the consequences of a great crime, the revenge of his enemies, or bitter poverty. He could still live, if he wished, after a fashion, but such a life was not worth while. A dozen years ago it would have been so, but he was very tired of the machinery: the dressing and undressing, the eating and drinking and sleeping. He no longer ever felt buoyant and well. The physical had failed him. But this contemplation of the evening was pleasant. Perhaps he could continue such pleasure

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in another state of existence. Philosophers, from the beginning, had thought it more than possible. He might try the experiment. Annihilation could be no pain; existence could not be worse. Which-ever theory proved true, he had nothing to lose.

He lighted a cigarette, gazed for a few moments at the sun sinking behind the Palisades of the Hudson, and then turned toward the south. There lay the city, a mist of roofs in a glow that seemed to be the dust of men battling with one another. The solitary church spire which he had noted from the elevated train on his first trip to this region rose detached, lifting the cross into the illuminated upper air. What did religion stand for, he asked himself, but colossal egotism, the determination to exist after death? What was it but one expression of the will to live which served Nature's purpose of peopling the earth and giving life an illusion of hope? For himself, he neither hoped nor feared. He was passively expectant.

As he turned the arc of the path toward the east, he saw Cresson's church, but dimly, beyond the arm of the park that lay between. The tower was becoming indistinguishable against the darker sky, but for a few moments longer it stood there, a reminder of past experiences which interested him no longer, and of an obligation from which he would soon be free. If Josephine and Cresson were in love

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with each other, he wished them well. But they faded from his mind with the fading tower, leaving only himself and his own destiny as the theme of his meditations.

After the unusual heat of the day a gradual wind was rising. It swayed the tall grass that clothed the mound of the reservoir, and blew the white down of dandelions across his path. The coolness of the grass invited him to sit down, shoulder-deep, in the luxuriant growth. Never had the earth seemed so teeming with vitality; never had it seemed so restful to be near her.

It was fully dark when Berwyn left the oval at last, and turned into Gun Hill Road. Across the railroad tracks the lights of Williamsbridge began to prick the blackness of the opposite slope. There was another old haunt, his American Italy, the source of the only inspiration he had ever known. He was walking slowly, half inclined to seek again, for a few hours, his accustomed corner in Fabietti's, when, under the glare of an electric light, he came face to face with an Italian woman, carrying a bundle of firewood on her head.

He stopped and asked the way to Williamsbridge, for the sake of using and hearing once more the well-loved language, and to confirm also his first impression of the woman's beauty. She was young, and as beautiful as he had thought: a vivid picture

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of barbaric colour, — the red kerchief about her head, and eyes with all a rustic Cleopatra's mystery of love and hate. Just so, he reflected, animals are beautiful, and primitive peoples who are guided by their emotions alone. When this was the only beauty he cared for in women, and passion all he asked of them, why had he chosen a moral being for a wife, rejecting the red rose for one of paler hue?

He went on his way, and spoke no more to any one, carrying this last vision unspoiled past the swarming and sordid tenements beyond. Why should he hesitate, since he had eaten and drunk to repletion, to leave his seat at the banquet of life for others?

He turned northward once more, and followed the high stone wall of the cemetery until the marble shafts shone faintly beyond the pickets of the iron fence. At a lower point of the wall he made an entrance, and found himself among the graves, panting with exhaustion, but not with fear. How easy such an exertion would have been to him once! A revulsion against the body, its limitations and temptations, seized upon him. It seemed a clean and rational thing to die, the only release from that vesture of decay which, once his delight, had become the source of all his woe. Surely, if he had a soul, this was the one way to save it.

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And he could not grow old; the thought was ghastly to him.

Sitting at last on the steps of his own cenotaph, Berwyn gave himself up to random thoughts: memories of the evening he first climbed hither and read the inscription by match-light; of the subsequent afternoon, when Cresson met him and turned him back from his possible purpose; of all their odd association since then; and of the woman who had come between them. How would Josephine take his departure? Who would find him, and when? Would they open that iron door against which he leaned, and put him away with pomp and ceremony? And if so, would his real self see it all, and wonder at their pains? He became drowsy and confused, striving to recall the exact Latin of Seneca's remark to the effect that the parade of death terrifies more than death itself. Was it *magis terret*, or *plus*?

At dawn he awoke, stiff and sore, his head resting against the granite pillar. Sleep had stolen upon him unawares, and now he felt belated, like a ghost who has overstayed his time. A train was rushing down the valley toward the city. Before it reached the point opposite to him he would do it, or never.

And thus, after a life of study and adventure, of contact with the noblest and deepest things in the

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world, the immediate occasion of his death was trivial, a mere whim, or a superstitious trick of the mind; as if a child should touch every gatepost on his way home from school, or carefully step across every shadow in his path.

CHAPTER XXVIII

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WHEN Cresson, sitting at dinner that evening in his restaurant, read in the paper the account of Berwyn's death, his first sensation was one of triumph. The enemy who had deceived and despised and defeated him was gone. His place was nowhere to be found. His self-inflicted death was a confession of failure. God had punished the wicked and rewarded the righteous. Fierce fragments of denunciatory psalms which had become part of Cresson's brain and blood floated through his memory. The fool had said in his heart "There is no God," but God had smitten him, had taken away the weapons in which he trusted,—his wealth and his philosophy. And Josephine was free. She had never been Berwyn's as she would be his. This was his conviction, and the final drop in his cup of intoxication.

But he knew almost immediately the wickedness of his heart, and a blackness of remorse fell upon him. He flung the paper down, as if it burned his fingers, and left the place to hurry back to his rooms, like a criminal seeking refuge. Once there, he locked the door against intrusion and walked

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up and down, trying to collect his thoughts and to measure the extent of his guilt. Outside, the confused murmur of the Ghetto arose, a babel of accusing tongues. If his people could know him as he was, those among whom he had laboured, those he had convinced, they would repudiate him as an impostor. He had told them that the broader conception of the God of Love had supplanted the old idea of the God of Vengeance, and it was all talk, intellectual pride, fondness for argument. Had it been real with him, would it not have stood this test?

He sank on his knees, determined to pray for pardon, but he could not pray as yet. In his reaction of mood, Berwyn took on the dignity of death and became a reproachful ghost. Cresson saw now that he had probably rescued him from self-destruction at their first meeting. His first instinct about the man and his first action were right; then all was wrong. Why did he never make a serious effort to show his guest the truth, when he had evidently been thrown in his way for that very purpose? Because he cared too much for his own dignity to risk a courteous contempt of his faith. Had he done his duty at the beginning, Berwyn might never have played him false, might never have stolen Josephine from him. But he was ashamed of the gospel of Christ in the face of

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pagan refinement and subtlety. There his courage failed him ; that was his great opportunity, but he did not see it, blinded as he was by pride and love of self.

At the very last, God had mercifully given him another chance. Berwyn came to hear him. He was in trouble ; perhaps he was then wrestling with the grim temptation to which he finally yielded ; perhaps his overture was prompted by a vague hope of reconciliation and help. Who could tell? But Cresson had assumed that he came out of curiosity to see his enemy make a fool of himself, above all, to flaunt Josephine in his face. He remembered now Berwyn's quiet acceptance of his scornful refusal. Why had he taken counsel of his own sensitiveness and thrust this man into the outer darkness? He could see only Berwyn's side now, not the side that was formerly his own, nor the middle view which would leave the problem a balanced mystery. Thus he wrestled until the night deepened, and the streets were still. Finally, out of his repentance, came the power to pray, and he was freed from blood-guiltiness by the consciousness of pardon.

After that hour his penance began. He would make no effort to see Josephine. If his love of her had not influenced his treatment of Berwyn at the first, it had done so at the last. He remembered, too, that it was for her sake he was once tempted

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to abandon all thought of his mission; and he must still choose between his work and her. If she loved him, she would tempt him again; and if she did not love him, why should he court new torment by seeking her? So a month passed by, and he went away to seek diversion and rest, but did not find it. He returned to his work, but the heart had gone out of him. Josephine still haunted his mind, and gradually he began to justify her presence there. It might be that she needed him. If she too were troubled by a sense of guilt in regard to Berwyn, who was there to help her? But the summer wore away, while he struggled doggedly with the old temptation in this new guise, and it was autumn before he yielded. One October afternoon he dropped debate and went to find her, determined to discover whether this were a delusion, based on his desire, or the call of duty.

He was not surprised to see Berwyn's house closed and billed for sale, and the fact gave him relief. It seemed to mark the end of that episode in Josephine's life. She had returned to her father's house, and he would find her there, perhaps waiting for him to come. He went back to Third Avenue, following the route Berwyn had taken on his last trip. Like Berwyn, too, he recalled the first time he had gone that way, when the bishop sent him out to the Bronx to look over his field of work.

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There he was to gather in the scattered people, to buy the land, and build a church. And among all his plans then, eager as he was to make a name for himself in his first charge, no thought of a woman had entered. Now it seemed to him all Josephine. The church he had built was like another's work, so completely had the last two years changed his point of view in regard to his special call. But she remained, the unchanging fact; and when he saw St. Basil's tower in the distance, he was moved by the sight chiefly because the woods that billowed up to the base of the hill concealed the house in which she lived.

There was a fever of anticipation in his veins when he went up the familiar steps and came face to face with Judge Faile. He could scarcely wait for the old man's greetings and deliberate speech.

"And where is Josephine?" he demanded.

"She went toward the pines," Mr. Faile answered explicitly, "some half hour ago."

If he experienced any sensation at being thus cut short, he did not show it; but his eyes were full of speculation and interest as he watched the young man swinging down the road.

Cresson crossed the bridge into the woods and began to climb the path that followed the river. Here the variegated glory of the autumn ceased. It was always the same in the grove of hemlock:

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brown needles underfoot, dark green needles overhead, and a continuous sound of wind, like the murmur of the sea's ebb tide on a pebbly shore. The sun was now throwing the shadows of the great trunks far across the valley of the stream to the opposite shore, and never had the woods seemed so majestic. Their silence and mystery were a symbol of his quest. Would he find her there, and would all the strange confusion of their history be unrolled as their eyes met? Or was this scene prophetic of the changelessness of his fate?

At a turn of the path he saw her, sitting at the foot of a great tree, in a shaft of sunlight. Against her brown dress and gloomy background her hair and face shone with an ethereal fairness. She was without hat or gloves, as he had so often seen her. It was the Josephine he had first known. She was not dressed in black, to send a chill through his heart. There was a touch of the old freedom in this, too. It was not because she had not suffered, but because she had made a fight against the morbid, and won. She watched him approach as if fascinated, without even a smile of welcome; then suddenly she arose, and he took her hands.

"I knew you would come," she said frankly, "and if you had n't —"

She glanced down at a letter which had fallen from her lap, and he knew her meaning.

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He stooped and took it up. "Let me read it," he begged her.

But her fingers closed on it too, and they stood there with the letter between them. She was a girl once more, in the presence of her first lover. Her face, just now so pale with a strange sorrow and an untold love, became suffused with colour, and her hands trembled.

"No, no," she protested. "It is n't mailed yet — I had n't sent it — I was still debating —"

"But it is addressed to me," he insisted.

However, he allowed her to recover the message, and she crumpled it in her hand.

"What difference does it make, Josephine?" he asked.

She saw his intention in his eyes, and eluded him swiftly. He followed her deeper into the woods, and she explained, a little breathlessly, "It was such a foolish letter that I did n't want you to see it."

She told him what it contained, nevertheless, and he found that his intuition was correct. She too had been haunted by a consciousness of guilt, of lost opportunity. It was not a love letter, but an appeal for comfort. The same questions had knocked at both their hearts; and Cresson answered them now, as best he could.

"Then you don't believe he is lost forever?" she asked him, wistfully.

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He was touched by the dropping of the scepticism she had so often asserted, by something childlike in her turning to him for the authoritative answer, and he told her truly that he could not believe that any one was lost; that this life was only part of an endless drama; and that there were other opportunities of learning and of progress under conditions of which they knew nothing. No doubt he spoke many commonplaces, as they wandered on, but all truth is commonplace until experience gives it life. They turned to face the sunset, and moved through an enchanted atmosphere, that touched every word they spoke with its own sublimity. Did Josephine recall her walk with Berwyn down this very path? She must have done so, and have striven to put the memory behind her, though memory was to be forever her portion. She would not allow the unreality of that experience to mar this hour; yet it must mar this and many hours in future years, until love should become perfect.

It was dark when they reached the bridge that led to her father's house. Josephine paused and leaned over the parapet, while she tore the letter she still carried into fragments, and scattered them on the water below.

"I was reading in a book lately," she told him, "of a Japanese custom of writing prayers on small bits of paper and throwing them into a river. I am

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doing the same thing now, though my prayer is already answered."

Cresson caught her in his arms and kissed her, and her salt tears were on his lips, the very bitter-sweet of the depths of life.

"I thought it would be so complicated, my darling," he said. "I thought you would make conditions —"

"Conditions," she echoed, her eyes shining up at him in the gloom. "Should I make conditions, when we have each other at last? I want you to do what you ought to do, and am proud of you for it. You did n't think, Cyril, did you, that I could be converted too?"

Mr. Uxbridge was at dinner that night, and a subdued party they made of it. No one spoke of Berwyn, though he was in the minds of all. Cresson suspected that his own presence was the cause of this reticence. It seemed to him that the judge had scarcely been touched by the tragedy, but that Mrs. Faile had lost all interest in life. The architect's attitude was more obscure. He was not his old loquacious self, and yet he did not convey the impression of one bereaved. Cresson could not know that Berwyn had died, as far as his uncle was concerned, in every sense but the actual one, some two years before. He noted his impressions without constraint, and felt no need to talk, watching Jose-

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phine's softly illuminated face, and thinking of the secret that lay between them.

Later in the evening, when the three men were sitting in the judge's study, it was Uxbridge who saw Josephine coming from her mother's room, and followed her out on to the verandah. But Cresson was not disturbed. He heard their voices murmuring indistinctly somewhere in the night, and bided his time, waiting for her return.

"You don't mean that you are going to marry him?" the architect questioned, aghast, as he began to catch the meaning of her story. •

She was sitting in the old swing, and Uxbridge occupied a chair near her, as Cresson had done that afternoon she ran from him to give her birds their freedom. She thought of the incident now, with a little thrill of satisfaction at the remembrance of his power over her.

"Yes," she answered, "I shall. To-day I went out into the woods, trying to make up my mind, as I promised you I would, and he found me there. If he had n't come, I can't tell,—I might have mailed him a letter I had written, and have asked you to wait longer; or I might have done as you wished. But he did come, and when I saw him, I knew. You must accept my answer. It is better for us both. There are many men in the world a woman might get along with, who might be her dear

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friends, but there is only one man she loves, who can influence her to do things, one man who makes her heart stand still when she sees him. I could never love any one else as I love him."

"Have you considered the life you must live?" he demanded.

She put out her hand in a warning gesture.

"Don't bring that up again," she begged him. "I have no illusions about the life, and I shall miss — some things, you can't understand how much. I mean that he shall never find it out. I am going to deceive him this far, that I shall not tell him I was tempted a second time, or weighed love a second time against wealth and friendship. I shall get my recompense just by being with him. His victory is greater than he knows. You will forgive me for being very happy, and be my friend still?"

There was silence between them, while he watched the dim, slender figure swinging in the starlight, thinking bitterly that he alone appreciated her and could give her what she ought to have. But presently her warm little hand sought his, and his resentment broke.

"I must," he said. He kissed her hand hungrily, then stood up. "I ought not to keep you out in this cold air longer," he went on, "and an old fellow like me had better go in too and have a night-cap with his contemporary. I say it against my

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heart, my dear, and every word gives me pain, but you are right. You are on the road to the only happiness this poor world offers. You have become the woman I knew you could be, and God bless you — I wish you joy.”

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